



# INDIAN PAGEANT



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BY

F. YEATS-BROWN

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## PREFACE

THE stupendous area and population of India and the complexity of her problems must certainly be present to the mind of anyone who contemplates her history; and these immensities are even more apparent to one who attempts—as I am doing—to delineate the picture in pocket size. Everything is on a massive scale: great philosophies, great languages, great art, great empires, proud civilisations that rise to unexampled splendour and fall into unbelievable squalor.

I have, of course, tried to simplify and select, rather than to reduce the picture by micro-photography: it would have been a fruitless task to outline what has been so often outlined before. Skeletons have their uses, but I want to make something that lives and moves, for however short a time. (As to skeletons in cupboards, they have been dragged out far too often from the Indian underworld.) My aim has been to give my countrymen, who have somewhat neglected India ever since Charles II leased Bombay to London merchants for £10 a year “in free and common soccage,” a pageant of India as I see it, a continuity, not an analysis or list of dates.

Continuity there is when you stand back from the picture and see it in its right perspective. Hindu and Moslem cultures meet at the top. Akbar’s Gate of Victory at Fatehpur Sikri and the ornate Dravidian temples of South India both proclaim Ramakrishna’s saying that “Truth is One: sages call it by different names.” And that, of course, was also said by Akbar’s friend, Abu Fazl. Nor are these cultures merely of the past. In spite of outward appearances (such as the shackles of caste and custom) India is a land of artists and adventurers. Tourists have sometimes said that the people seem worn out by the weight of their traditions, pessimistic, tired of life. That is an altogether false picture,

a generalisation from the distorted impression inevitably made on hurried minds. If you travel from the bazaars of Peshawar to the Virgin's Shrine at Cape Cormorin, and from the Towers of Silence to the Black Pagoda, taking your time, and looking below the surface, or better still if you live and work with Indians in India, you will not think the masses are tired of life (or sunk in "pathetic contentment," as the late Edwin Montagu did), for you will see them expending huge sums on festivals in spite of their poverty, giving an inordinate bounty to beggars, producing collectively 24,000 babies a day with reckless joy: whole nations avid for life and colour and gaiety, yet preserving always a sense of beauty and a sense of the world unseen. Such outpourings may be foolish and unpractical—sometimes they are, and sometimes not—but they are not at any rate evidence of decadence or senility.

I love India almost as I love my own country; and lovers are not impartial. Possibly I overestimate the value to the Western world of Indian art. If you prefer New Delhi to Moghul Delhi we shall have nothing in common. On the other hand, as an Englishman I may have emphasised unduly the rôle played by my own people in building the administration of the country where I spent the best years of my life. God forbid that these pages should be considered as propaganda: our blunders and brutalities have been many, but our achievements have also been many since Job Charnock founded Calcutta in 1690.

I hope, at any rate, that I shall have avoided the common fault, mentioned long ago by Sir William Hunter, of dismissing the first 4,000 years of Indian history in a couple of pages, and starting the book in earnest with a description of subject peoples. We have all been conquered: the Anglo-Saxons far more completely by the Norman invasion, for instance, than the Hindus by the irruptions of Mahmud of Ghazni at about the same date. As a matter of fact, the high-caste Hindus (that is to say, men of our own stock, the descendants of the early Aryan-speaking peoples) have never been completely overrun or submerged, and the best brains amongst them are unmistakably true to type.

Akbar, the contemporary of Queen Elizabeth, though born a Moslem, came to the conclusion that he could not found a permanent empire without Hindu help. His aim was to unite the country in a federation giving freedom to all in matters of religion. That was his ideal, and a great book might and should be written on why he failed. My task is simpler. I do not myself believe that a single government can satisfy the divergent cultures and aspirations of present-day India, but I have kept this opinion in the background until the concluding chapter. The rest of the book deals with facts, set down with all the impartiality of which I am capable.

I must confess, however, that facts do not seem to me to provide the whole framework of Indian history—or any history. Behind them is destiny, or the will of God. Certainly in India we see behind the rise and fall of kingdoms an elemental power, like gravity. You may dam the Indus and Ganges, and fertilise a million acres, or you may conquer a continent, but such feats, which seem important enough at first sight, in reality leave little mark. The great mass of water, the great mass of people continues on a path which is changing, no doubt, but changing in its own time, which is not always human time. But when our time comes—as it did to Clive at Plassey—then miracles occur.

Perhaps the time is ripe for a new and more important miracle. There seems to me something miraculous in our British dealings with India, which began as a commercial venture and led us through all sorts of confusions and dismays to become the agents—sometimes unconscious, but by no means always—whereby a flame of freedom was fanned throughout the land. Now in these days of crisis we can look forward to playing a noble part in the future of India, but only if we understand the forces which shaped her past.

F. Y.-B.

BERKHAMSTED, *July*, 1942.

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## CHAPTER I

### PREHISTORIC INDIA

A GAP of 2,000 years separates two remarkable civilisations of prehistoric India: that between the urban Indus Valley people who built flourishing cities at Harappa and Mohenjo-daro<sup>1</sup>—and no doubt elsewhere—from 3500 B.C. onwards, and the nomadic Aryans who came down from Central Asia, singing and fighting, and grazing their cattle over the Land of the Five Rivers, sometime about 1500 B.C.

The Indus Valley folk planned their cities with broad and regular streets. Their houses consisted of several storeys, with inside stairs, cellars, storerooms, ample bathrooms, and underground drainage. At Harappa may be seen a model of a cart, which is probably the most ancient wheeled vehicle yet discovered, and at Mohenjo-daro there exists ample evidence, in weapons, jewellery, painted pottery, engraved seals, dice, chessmen, of the high state of civilisation reached by this people, whose existence was only discovered by the Archæological Survey of India in 1920. Out of the alluvium of the Indus their cities rise to remind us of how little we know about the distant past. Men and women lived and loved in this corner of India 5,000 years ago, amidst surroundings far more comfortable and better organised than those obtaining to-day in the average village of the Punjab or Sind.

How came it that the vigorous and artistic Aryans found no one in the lands they conquered but dark-avised, goat-nosed and godless aborigines? Had the Indus Valley people by then disappeared, and their seed with them, leaving not a trace behind? Or did the Aryan infiltration not extend so far down the great river? This is possible, but it is also

<sup>1</sup> Harappa is 15 miles from the modern town of Montgomery in the Punjab (116 miles south-west of Lahore) and Mohenjo-daro is 265 miles upstream from Karachi, on the right bank of the Indus.

possible that the Aryans lied. Non-Aryans were very likely not as black as they have been painted by those whose "wines and beasts supplied their feasts." Some were savage tribes, no doubt, for these still exist in the forest regions of the south and east of India, but other races had established powerful kingdoms, and doubtless also the mental as well as the physical bases of culture.

Except for the Indus Valley ruins, all that we know of pre-historic India is derived from Aryan poems and prayers. The Aryans built no brick cities and carved no stone, but they made for themselves an imperishable monument in their speech, in which they sang the Vedic hymns. This Aryan speech was the mother of Sanskrit and therefore the grandmother of almost all European languages. The word "mother" is "*matar*" in Sanskrit, in Latin "*mater*," in Slavic "*mati*," in German "*mutter*." *Duhitar* comes from the Sanskrit *duh*, to milk, and "preserves the memory of the time when the daughter was the little milkmaid in the Aryan household,"<sup>1</sup> as indeed she is to this day in many an Indian village.

*Pitar*, *bratar*, *svasar*, *sunu* have become our "father," "brother," "sister," "son"; and so on for hundreds of other words that bring to life the dust of heroes, poets and philosophers who spoke (for they did not write until a thousand years later) some of the profoundest thoughts on love, life and death that have been conceived by mankind in any age.

"The civilisation of India," Dr. A. A. Macdonell writes, "as well as the literature which reflects it, displays not only originality but also a continuity which has scarcely a parallel elsewhere."

It is not easy to exaggerate the depth of thought and feeling in the Vedas, but we need not suppose that the singers were supermen. Gifted they were, and they have preserved in their descendants, the "twice-born" castes of Hinduism, a tradition of plain living and high thinking. We can trace, as in all life, the bud, the blossom, and the fruit of the Aryan civilisation.

<sup>1</sup>. *A Brief History of the Indian People*, by Sir W. W. Hunter (Clarendon Press, 1903), 23rd edition.

The budding was in the unknown motherland, somewhere in the uplands of Central Asia, whence these tall blue-eyed people sallied forth in search of better grazing lands and adventure to the south-east, to India, and to the south-west, to Iran. Here the early Vedas were composed. The blossom was in Punjab. And it was in the rich lands of the Ganges that the fruits of their philosophy matured in 500 B.C., in the scriptures known as the Upanishads, where Absolute is perhaps for the first time in history grasped and expressed with clarity.

"Nor aught nor naught existed then, at the Creation, not aerial space, nor the bright heaven. What covered all? On what rested all? Was it water or the abyss?

"Death was not then, nor immortality; and there was no difference between day and night. The One breathed breathless in Itself, and there was nothing other than It.

"In the beginning there was darkness in darkness enfolded, all was indistinguishable water . . .

"Desire first arose in It, which was the primal germ of mind, and which poets discovered in their hearts to be the bond between Being and Not-Being.

"The ray of light which stretched athwart these worlds, did it come from below or from above? Seeds were sown, and mighty forces arose, Nature beneath, and Power and Will above.

"Who indeed knows? Who proclaimed it here? Whence was this Creation produced?"

That is a question that twenty centuries have not settled, though the Hindus have propounded hundreds of solutions.

Such speculations were alien to the joyous optimism of the Rik Veda, whose date is at least a thousand years earlier, but there is a similarity in tone and temper, as witness the famous hymn to Ushas, the dawn-maiden:

"Ushas awakens all creatures to follow their different paths, the sluggard to stir, the pleasure-seeker to his enjoyment, the merchant to business, the King to his court, the warrior to the way of fame, the servant to his tasks.

"She follows the track of dawns that are past, and is the first of uncounted dawns to come. How great is the in-



terval between the dawns that are past and the dawns to come!

"Long departed are those men who saw the first Ushas arise. We gaze on her now, as others will, down the long avenues of time.

"Rise, our life, our breath! The darkness has gone, light approaches! Ushas has opened a path for the sun! Mother of the Gods, mirror of the Infinite, banner of sacrifice, mighty Ushas, shine forth, arise, give ear to our prayer, thou giver of all good things!"

In these early Vedic days, when the Aryans were settled in the triangle formed by the Indus and Sutlej rivers, with the Himalayas as the north-eastern boundary (roughly between the modern cities of Lahore, Rawalpindi and Multan, with an influx of immigrants coming down the caravan routes of the Khyber, Kurram, Tochi and Gumul), they lived in mud houses, drank beer, ate beef, and treated women as their equals. Purdah, child-marriage, suttee,<sup>1</sup> and caste distinctions between themselves were unknown. In the marriage ceremony the woman is told: "Exercise thy authority over all the household until thy old age. Be thine eyes free from anger: minister to the happiness of thy husband: cherish the cattle. May thy mind be cheerful and thy beauty bright. Be the mother of heroic sons, and devoted to the Gods."

Life was not easy for the Aryans. The climate of the Panjab varies from intense heat and drought to bitter winter weather. There were wild beasts and human enemies; nevertheless, there were also wide grazing grounds, and a plentiful supply of human labour. They were a virile stock, with fertile land, a bracing climate, not too much security, yet enough to give leisure and prosperity to the favoured race. It was under such conditions that the Vedic hymns were composed.

Later, in the time of the Upanishads, say 500 B.C., we

<sup>1</sup> *Sati* means "faithful," and the term is really only applicable to the woman who immolates herself; but it is convenient to describe the practice as suttee, rather than by the technical term *sahagamana*, a "going along with." See *Suttee*, by Edward Thompson (Allen and Unwin, 1928)

find that family prayers were no longer said. Priests had elaborated a ritual, and were engaged on high and secret speculations. They had also instituted that continuing curse of Hinduism, caste, which began as a colour-bar against the dark inhabitants who were their servants or their foes, and sometimes both. Later, the community split up into priests, soldiers, tradesmen, servants. So the four castes grew, the Brahmins from the mouth of the Creator, the Rajputs or fighting men from His arms, the Vasyas or merchants from His belly, and the Sudras, or serfs, from His feet.

Having established their power, the Brahmins made, on the whole, wise use of it. They were honest and abstemious, and shunned worldly possessions. Government was the task of the warriors. The domain of the Brahmins was the mind and soul—and at the right hand of every ruler sat one of their number—and still sits—to remind the temporal power that all is vanity.

Thousands, perhaps millions, of subtle minds in this prehistoric India, men with great leisure and great mental power, tried everything, discussed everything, and put the best of their thought into easily memorised verse over a period of two thousand years. As far as we know that was all that happened, but certainly our ignorance covers great gaps of vivid living. The people of India in this first Golden Age were wide-awake, industrious, active: amongst them were chariot-makers, carpenters, carvers, weavers, wig-makers, dyers, tanners, painters, potters, boatmen, musicians, goldsmiths; and poets, philosophers, mathematicians, astronomers.

Crowns must have toppled, and dynasties risen, but until the birth of Buddha (563 B.C.) no human figure stands out clearly on the Punjab plain, with its background of snow-capped Himalayas.

## CHAPTER II

### LORD BUDDHA AND THE BRAHMINS

HOW Prince Siddharta Gautama—revered as Lord Buddha by 500 million people to-day—left his father's house 2,500 years ago, to become a hermit, a Yogi, and finally a great teacher, is known wherever the English language is spoken, thanks largely to Sir Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia*.<sup>1</sup>

It is a story founded on old tradition, and bears the marks of truth in all its essentials, although there have been inevitably added legends and priestly embellishments.

There are fairly recent theories that Buddha is a "sun-myth," and that Kapilavastu (his reputed birthplace, which has never been quite satisfactorily identified) means only "the town of Kapila," the founder of a famous school of Hindu philosophy who lived a century before the Enlightened One; but the acceptance of such views involves many more difficulties than they remove. Better it is to accept the story that has come down to us through the centuries, for in it shines the diamond mind of one of the noblest characters in history: a man of commanding intellect and high creative power, who suffered much in silence (he must have been rather monk-ridden in his old age) and worked hard and humbly to help his fellow-men.

The Sakya tribe from which he came<sup>2</sup> was of the Aryan "solar" race (of the most ancient lineage) and had estab-

<sup>1</sup> Sir Edwin Arnold's beautiful verse is a sound guide both to the story of Buddha and to his teaching: a better guide than many more ambitious volumes of Buddhist philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> He is often called Sakyamuni, the sage of the Sakyas. Siddharta was his baptismal name, and Gautama his family name. In remote ages there are held to have been many previous Buddhas or Enlightened Ones. One more is to come, Maitreya Buddha. Gautama Buddha had many previous incarnations, which are described in the charming Jataka stories.

lished itself at Kapilavastu, a small town in the foothills of the Himalayas, some 120 miles north of Benares, at some unknown period during the Aryan migration. The Sakyas were a small tribe, between the more powerful Aryan kingdoms of Magadha to the east and Kosala to the west; and Kapilavastu was a minor capital. Siddharta Gautama's father, King Suddhodana, was a small suzerain prince, rather than a reigning monarch, but it is idle to speculate on his exact status. Siddharta was his eldest son, by Maha Devi, a noble lady of a neighbouring tribe, and was heir to his estates.

At the time of Buddha's birth (563 B.C. is the generally accepted date) the Aryans lived in mud houses and wattle huts: they were not great builders like the Indus Valley people, or the people who established Benares (which was then the biggest city in the world after Carthage, reputed at that time to have had at least a million inhabitants) with its busy trade in fabrics, brass and ivory ware, and its converging trade routes from China to the east and Babylon to the west. It was a time of material prosperity, and the land was full of philosophers whose friendly and sometimes fantastic arguments attracted large audiences, for thinking and talking were pastimes for all classes in that bookless world.

Everywhere men were searching for solutions to the great problems of life: Confucius and Lao-tse in China, Thales and Solon in Greece, Ezekiel in his captivity in Babylon. In the Mediterranean and the Middle East the old civilisations were crumbling before the rising power of the Aryans: Romans against Etruscans, Greeks against Minoans, and Medes against the citizens of Babylon, whom they were to conquer in 538 B.C.

In the Buddhist tradition, Maya Devi, the future Buddha's mother, was transported in a dream to the Himalayas, where she conceived miraculously, a six-rayed star entering her womb in one account, and a white elephant entering her side in another. There is a Virgin Birth, a homage of trees and water to the Divine Infant, and an aged sage (Asita) who recognises in the child the future Saviour, and

worships him. Siddharta did not himself speak of such phenomena in after life; indeed, during the forty-five years of his ministry he stated frequently and with emphasis that he was subject to all the limitations of humanity, his last words being: "Brethren, I impress on you, decay is inherent in all things. Work out your own salvation with diligence."

His mother died when he was only a week old, and he was brought up by his aunt. From what we know of his energy afterwards we may infer that he distinguished himself in all the attributes of a prince. It is true that he said later to his followers: "I was born delicate, O monks, very delicate," but the tradition is that he was a mighty bowman and he was certainly a warrior by caste. Probably he took part in army training, hunted, wrestled, played chess, dice, and various ball games, and attended the theatre: such would have been the life of the Sakya heir-apparent. He would not have been remote from the world in that democratic age and land, though probably of a studious and contemplative bent of mind. After his Enlightenment, his converts and companions came from all classes: kings, acrobats, merchants, princesses, slave-girls, barbers, fishermen, cowherds and wandering ascetics. Shortly before his death he stayed at the house of the famous courtesan, Ambapalika; and the dinner which caused his death (it is not certain whether the dish was bad mushrooms or bad pork) was eaten in the hut of a poor smith, by name Chunda, for whom the Buddha felt an anxious concern on his death-bed, lest he should be blamed for poisoning him.

Siddharta Gautama is said to have been tall and dignified, with a voice and manner which impressed all who saw and heard him.<sup>1</sup> Many are the stories of his tender heart. As a boy he rescued a wounded swan, brought down by the bow of his cousin Devadatta. Devadatta claimed the prey, but Siddharta refused to give it up, saying the swan was his:

The first of myriad things which shall be mine  
By right of mercy and love's lordliness;

---

<sup>1</sup> There is ample evidence for this in the traditions; moreover, no one but an impressive speaker could have held audiences in those days.

For now I know, by what within me stirs,  
That I shall teach compassion unto men  
And be a speechless world's interpreter.<sup>1</sup>

The compassion that Buddha was to teach to men and beasts was not in the least theoretical. When a patient was brought to him in later life, smelling so horribly that none of the monks would touch him, Buddha washed and tended the sick man himself.<sup>2</sup> Cleanliness was inculcated in the Buddhist Order as soon as it was founded, and stoves were installed so that the monks should be able to heat their baths.

As Siddharta Gautama grew to manhood he saw "the thorns that grow upon the rose of life," and became too pensive and philosophical for his father's liking. The King built gorgeous palaces for him, and filled them with beautiful girls, but they did not wean the boy's mind from its pre-occupations. Wine and women and gambling were the Aryan vices, but there was an even more dangerous weakness in the mind of this young prince: the world-renouncing tendency, latent then as now in the Hindu character. What if his son were to become a Yogi? What would happen to the State, placed so dangerously between two powerful neighbours?

One day Prince Siddharta drove out with Chandaka, his head groom, to see the sights of Kapilavastu. He felt imprisoned in his splendid house: doubtless he made many journeys to mix with his fellow-men, but tradition has condensed them into Four Scenes which brought him face to face with reality.

Round him, as he drove to the city, lay a smiling and emerald-green countryside, brighter, more verdant and variegated here in these foothills than in the eastward plain. The King had given orders that all ugly things were to be hidden from him, but the boy's eyes were keen. He saw, in

<sup>1</sup> *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold.

<sup>2</sup> "Whosoever, O monks, would wait on me," he said, "should tend the sick." This must have been a startling doctrine in his day; it had not been anticipated by the Egyptians or Chinese. It is, I think, the first explicit enunciation of ideas that were to become the core of Christ's life and teaching.

succession, an aged man, a leper, a corpse being carried to a funeral pyre; and in contrast to these views of the transiency of life, of pain, and of death, he saw an ascetic, setting out happily for the Himalayas, with nothing but a blanket and a begging bowl.

The Himalayas! They stand to-day as they did in Buddha's time, their white summits pointing to a freedom above all earthly ties. They left their mark on Buddha's heart as surely as the glory of the desert did on Muhammad's.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE moment of the Great Renunciation is unlikely to have been a matter of impulse, as the ancient (but never contemporary) chroniclers suggest. It is certainly unlikely that when Prince Siddharta heard of the birth of his first-born, Rahula,<sup>1</sup> he said, "Here is another bond to break," and that he left his wife and child that very night. But there is an authentic touch in the tradition that when he left his home his wife was sleeping, and that he gave up his desire to say good-bye so that he might leave her undisturbed.

He was twenty-nine when he came to his decision. Already he must have been well accustomed to weigh the consequences of his acts. His was a cool brain, and his genius told him that not by human means alone could he help mankind. To be an enlightened King would not have been enough for what he knew to be his destiny. His fate was to feel as well as to know, and the conditions of his life made a change imperative.

Calling for Chandaka to bring him his white horse, Kannaka, he set out on a pilgrimage whose stages were in after years to be marked by great shrines. It is true that the shrines have now disappeared, or lie in ruins; nevertheless Buddhism remains the inspiration and the support of more souls than any other faith.

The horsemen rode through the night to the banks of a small Anoma river. Having crossed it, they halted, and while the horses dipped their muzzles into the stream,

<sup>1</sup> The word means "a tie."

Siddharta told Chandaka that he would never return to his father's city until "he had conquered old age, disease and death." He cut off his long hair, disrobed, gave his jewels to Chandaka, patted Kannaka's neck. . . . It was the end of the old life.

Homeless and penniless, he made his way on foot to a hermit's cave in the forests across the Ganges, 200 miles to the south-east of Kapilavastu, where he found a famous Brahmin sage, Alara, who became his first teacher. His second *guru* was another Brahmin, Uddaka. Leaving him, as he had left Alara, because he had not found in Yoga any solution to the problems of "our proud and angry dust," he took five companions with him to a camp of Hatha Yogis, somewhere near the modern city of Rajgir, and there practised the most rigorous of physical disciplines, such as the trance-state by restraint of breath, fasting till his stomach touched his spine, and trying to "burn out his mind with his mind." Eventually, we are told, the thought occurred to him: "Perhaps there is another way to enlightenment: what if I now take some solid food?"

He was then too weak to find nourishment for himself, but a young mother, intending to offer boiled milk and rice to the Tree Spirit of the woods, in thanksgiving for the birth of a son, chanced to come to the place where he sat. Thinking him a god, she offered him her sacrifice.

Siddharta's companions were shocked when he accepted the woman's offering. He had become a backslider in their eyes, and they left him in scorn. Buddha remained unmoved, feeling that at last he could set his feet on the right path, that of discrimination, neither pampering the body nor torturing it with austerities. For six years he had sought wisdom at the hands of others, but all the various forms of Yoga had failed him, and now he had come to the conclusion that to find the truth at the heart of things he must travel the way alone.

He was on the eve of his Enlightenment then, and it occurred one night under the Bo-tree<sup>1</sup> by the river now known as the Phalga, at Buddh-Gaya, in his thirty-fifth year,

<sup>1</sup> The *pīpal*, or *Ficus religiosa*.



528 B.C., ten years after Belshazzar had seen the writing on the wall which presaged the fall of Babylon.

It was not until a month after his Enlightenment—a month of quiet, purposeful meditation, no doubt, to see how he might best impart to men the illumination he had gained—that he retraced his steps to Benares (135 miles to the west-north-west), where he preached his first sermon in the Deer Park to the north of that city.

The remaining forty-five years of his life he passed in preaching this path of discrimination, which he called the Aryan Path, or the Middle Way; and the eight steps to a better life: right views, right aspirations, right speech, right behaviour, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

It was not an easy doctrine, and Lord Buddha himself may have been surprised that it became so popular, for he said of it that “it is hard to perceive, tranquil, transcendent, beyond the sphere of reasoning, to be known only by the wise.”

In the West we sometimes imagine Buddhism to be a “religion of negation,” or “a stately flight of stairs that leads nowhere.” This is all wrong. Buddhism is hardly a religion, in its early teaching at any rate, but a joyous, practical, realistic way of looking at life. Joyous, because it is a protest against the Vedantic view that all is illusion, an affirmation, full of Aryan self-confidence, that sorrow and disease can be conquered by the mind of man, rightly directed. So far from leading nowhere, it has founded great schools of art, established thousands of monasteries, and profoundly influenced many civilisations.

Siddharta Gautama started a new and more humane society than any that had yet existed on earth. There were no caste restrictions or expensive sacrifices to deter his followers: it was a sane and humane teaching: “not by hatred are hatreds calmed,” he said, “but by non-hatred.”

Before Buddha, men had had grand ideas and expressed them in noble language, but he was the first, as far as we know, to wash a sick man with his own hands, and to found an Order of monks devoted to service rather than to philosophical speculation.

In youth no doubt he had enjoyed sharpening his faculties in the arguments on the Self, Superman, and Eternity, which were then so popular; but after his Enlightenment he realised intensely in his inner life, and probably through hours of boredom in his public life, the shallowness of verbal profundity, and the immense stupidity of which clever men are capable, for he spoke to his monks later of "the thicket of theorising, the wilderness of theorising, the tangle, bondage and shackles of theorising." In his old age he said, rather sharply, to his Boswellian-minded cousin and confidant, Ananda: "There is nothing strange in human beings dying, O Ananda, but it is wearisome to the Buddha that you should enquire about their future life." His Order was founded to help humanity; and to pull men out of quicksands he knew how necessary it was for his monks to have their feet on solid ground.

Of opposition he encountered little, considering how dangerous his agnostic views must have been to the Brahmin priesthood, and this must be accounted to their great credit. Buddha lived to the age of eighty, founding great monasteries, preaching to great assemblies, denouncing superstition, admitting women to his order (after grave doubts, however), scorning the caste system, denying the authority of the sacred Vedas, allowing no follower to lean on him, or on any god, save the God Within, and telling his monks: "Be ye lamps unto yourselves." The Brahmins have been guilty of many sins, but never of persecution of opinion.

\* \* \* \* \*

THE great teacher passed to his rest in 483 B.C., being burned with the pomp accorded to kings, amidst a mourning multitude of disciples. His ashes and other relics were distributed in eight parts to the tribes who had accepted his teaching.

His message of goodwill had spread to east and west, but it had not been able to stay the hand of war. Before his death, his birthplace had already been sacked in the convulsions which began when Darius invaded the North-West Frontier in 510 B.C. Some of the people of Peshawar—now

the Pathans—who were Buddha's kinsmen, and who claimed a share of his ashes, may have served in the light cavalry of Xerxes when the Persian took Athens.

In China Confucius had died a few years previously, lamenting the stupidity of his country's rulers, who would not accept his wise advice. In Babylon the Medes and Persians made the laws. In Palestine the Jews had returned from captivity and had built the Second Temple. Soon after Buddha's death Pericles began to rebuild the Parthenon, and Herodotus was born.

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**B**UDDHISM seems to have made no impression on Alexander the Great, though it must have been a flourishing sect at the time of the Macedonian invasion (326 B.C.). It was the Emperor Asoka (270 B.C.) who made of it a great world religion by becoming a disciple himself, and by powerful missionary propaganda.

For five centuries after Asoka Buddhism was predominant in India and spread throughout Asia. Yet the Brahmins never lost their hold on the people: they were patient and tenacious, and knew that although Buddha was a typical Aryan, the doctrines he had preached were too austere for the masses. Eight hundred and a thousand years after the Paranirvana (the death of Buddha), in the fifth and seventh centuries A.D., Chinese pilgrims travelling from Cathay to the holy places of their religion found the old Buddhist monuments crumbled and the worship of idols prevalent.

Eventually the Brahmins claimed Buddha for themselves, making him one of the *avatars* or incarnations of Vishnu, the Preserver of Mankind. Men needed a personal Saviour. They "were tired of pale perfections and bloodless beatitudes, and turned to the dark, delightful god who granted boons and danced with the milkmaids of Muttra: to a gay and musical god, who was so human that he never denied his divinity."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Lancer at Large* (Gollancz, 1936).

THE death of Buddha and the incursions of Darius into the North-West Frontier stand out but dimly on the Indian scene: we do know, however, that trade between India and the Mediterranean, along the caravan routes leading through Baktrà in the north, through Kabul in the centre, and Babylon in the south, had existed from very ancient times. But everything about India is conjectural until Alexander's invasion in 326 B.C.: that is the beginning of her history.

Alexander inherited his Eastern ambitions from his father, Philip of Macedon, and from the historians and philosophers of his time, who dreamed of a Greater Greece, and saw its fulfilment, step by step, as the Macedonian phalanx conquered Tyre, Sidon, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan. Early in the year 326 B.C. Alexander's columns came down through the Khyber Pass, crossed the Indus at Attock, and seized the wealthy and populous city of Taxila (twenty miles north-west of Rawalpindi), whose king welcomed the invader and placed five thousand men at his disposal.

"To what purpose," said this quivering monarch to the resplendent young conqueror, "should we make war on one another, if the design of your coming into these parts be but to rob us of our water, or our necessary food, which are the only things that wise men are indispensably obliged to fight for? As for other riches and possessions, as they are accounted in the eyes of the world, if I am better provided with them than you, I am ready to let you share with me; but if fortune has been more liberal to you than me, I have no objection to be obliged to you."

According to Plutarch, "this discourse pleased Alexander so much that embracing the King he said: 'Do you think your kind words and courteous behaviour will bring you off in this interview without a contest? No, you shall not escape. I shall do battle with you so far, that howsoever obliging you are, you shall not have the better of me.' Whereupon he gave him in money ready coined 1,000 talents" (a sum equivalent in modern currency to £1,000,000 sterling), "at which his old friends were much displeased, but it gained him the hearts of many of the barbarians."

The Macedonians rested at Taxila some weeks, finding it a pleasant and well-governed city, drawing great wealth from the regions extending from the Indus to the Jhelum. There was a market for slave girls, and a large and flourishing University.

The battle of the Hydaspes (now the Jhelum river) is vividly described by Plutarch, quoting from the lost letters of Alexander. The two armies were separated by the Jhelum, and the forces of Porus greatly outnumbered the Macedonians. The Indians had 30,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, 300 four-horsed chariots, each carrying six men, and 200 elephants. The latter were an unknown quantity when used in mass, but some of them had already terrified the Macedonian cavalry.

By means of a masterly night march, prepared with elaborate precautions, Alexander crossed the river one dark and stormy night (probably at the end of June, when the monsoon first broke), and advanced at dawn with his cavalry division (say 12,000 men) towards the main body of the enemy. It was a daring move, to attack a superior force with a flooded river in his rear. Porus was taken by surprise, and lost sixty chariots of his vanguard: Alexander then attacked the flanks of his army, and the Indians fell back in confusion to the centre, crowding in upon their precious elephants, who turned tail, trumpeting and squealing, and trampling down their own forces. Porus himself fought magnificently, and was severely wounded.

"Almost all the historians," Plutarch continues, "agree in relating that Porus was four cubits and a span high,<sup>1</sup> and that when he was upon his elephant, which was of the largest size, his stature and bulk were so answerable that he appeared to be proportionally mounted, as a horseman upon his horse. This elephant, during the whole battle, gave many singular proofs of sagacity and of care for the King, whom, as long as he was strong and in a condition to fight, he defended with great courage, repelling those who set upon him; and as soon as he perceived him overpowered with his numerous wounds, and the multitude of

<sup>1</sup> 7 feet 8 inches if we take the cubit as 22 inches.

darts that were thrown at him, to prevent his falling off he softly knelt down and began to draw out the darts with his proboscis."

Although Porus was defeated, he was at once reinstated as a Macedonian satrap and his domain enlarged.

Beyond the Macedonians lay an unknown world. It was the beginning of the rainy season. The vitality and ambition of Alexander were immune to weather and fatigue (he was only twenty-nine—just Siddharta's age when he left home) but not the ardour of his troops. They refused to go farther than Amritsar, and can hardly be blamed; yet Alexander also had a right to be enraged and to sulk in his tent, cursing his soldiers as cravens, for his men had turned back at the very threshold of success. Hindustan and all its enormous wealth was practically theirs for the taking, for their only remaining opponent, the King of Magadha (the modern Bihar), was universally hated and despised. Only four years later he was vanquished by a clever and ambitious Punjabi (a royal bastard he was said to be, by a barber and a queen), the famous Chandragupta Maurya.<sup>1</sup>

Accepting the inevitable, Alexander decided to withdraw down the Indus, certainly hoping to fight again another day in India. His fortunes do not concern us, except for a glimpse we get of him, out of Plutarch, when Macedonians met Indians in a fight that displays the courage of both races.

The Mallians, who nearly killed Alexander, have not

<sup>1</sup> After the battle of the Hydaspes Alexander is said to have named a city (whose site is unknown) after a favourite dog, Peritas, and another city (perhaps the modern Jhelum) after his favourite charger, Bucephalus, of whom historians relate details unsatisfactory to a horseman. If Bucephalus was thirty years old at the Jhelum battle, then he must have been already past his prime when Alexander was still a young boy, which is most improbable. And surely his name was not given to him because his head was shaped like a bull's? It is much more probable that he was a handsome and high-mettled animal who showed a bull-like determination not to be ridden by anyone but Alexander, and that Alexander trained him himself, in which case he might have been a five-year-old when Alexander was fifteen, and twenty years old when he died of wounds, or of heart-strain, after swimming across the flooded Jhelum and then carrying his master in full armour throughout the heat and hard fighting of a June day in the Punjab.

been identified, but Plutarch says of them that "they have the repute of being the bravest soldiers in India," a description that would apply to many races of the Punjab. Perhaps these men were Multanis, but Vincent Smith thinks not.

When besieging their city, wherever it was, Alexander was the first man to mount the scaling ladder placed against the fortress wall. The ladder broke, and Alexander jumped down from the ramparts into the thick of his enemies, followed by only two of his guards. At first the Indians retreated, thinking a phantom or some heavenly messenger had descended amongst them, so bright was his armour. (Alexander at bay, in his white wadded corselet, his sword and eyes flashing, his helm shining like silver, must indeed have been a god-like sight.) But recovering themselves quickly, the Indians attacked him, wounding him severely in the chest and neck. One of his two guards was killed, the other wounded.

Eventually he was rescued by his men in a fainting condition, with an arrow-head three fingers broad and four long embedded in his breast-bone. They sawed off the shaft with some difficulty in order to remove his clothes. "During the operation he was taken with an almost mortal swooning, but when it (the arrow-head) was out he came to himself again. Though all danger was past, he continued very weak, and confined himself a great while to a regular diet and the method of his cure, till one day, hearing the Macedonians clamouring outside in their eagerness to see him, he took his cloak and went out. And having sacrificed to the Gods, without more delay he went on board again, and as he coasted along subdued a great deal of the country on both sides, and several considerable cities."<sup>1</sup>

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**D**OWN the Indus Alexander passes from our view. When he died three years later at Babylon there was panic and dismay amongst the satrapies he had set up in India. In

<sup>1</sup> Quotations from Plutarch are taken from the amusing and instructive *Scenes and Characters from Indian History*, edited by C. H. Payne (Oxford Press, 1925).

the confusion, Chandragupta saw his opportunity. With the aid of a crafty Brahmin he overthrew the King of Magadha in his capital of Patna, and in the course of a few years established his power from Patna as far north as Kabul. By 315 B.C. the Macedonians had no power in India, though some of the colonies which Alexander had founded remained as feudatories to Chandragupta.

The riches of the Indus and Ganges Valleys were now known to Europe (were there not huge gold ingots there, guarded by ants the size of dogs, and pearls like pigeon's eggs, and fishes with the faces of women?), and from that day to this India has proved a lure to warriors and merchants. Seleukus Nikator, one of Alexander's generals who had carved out a kingdom in Syria, was the first to stoop upon the prey, but he found a bird of his own kind in Chandragupta Maurya.

Alexander's triumphs were not repeated by Seleukus, for by 306 B.C. the Indians had trained and equipped a first-class army. Both monarchs were well versed in war, alive not only to the gains to be derived from the conquest of weak peoples, but to its disadvantages when meeting an equal foe. They decided to make peace. Chandragupta bought the Indian provinces of Seleukus, as far as Kabul, at the price of 600 elephants, receiving also a daughter of Seleukus in marriage. With her came to Patna the famous Greek ambassador Megasthenes, whose writings, although now lost, have so often been quoted by later historians.

Chandragupta Maurya ruled in North India for twenty-four years (316-292 B.C.), being succeeded by his son Bindusara, and then by his more famous grandson Asoka (304-232 B.C.). This century—from the reign of Chandragupta to the death of Asoka—marks a period of high prosperity and flourishing civilisation in India—a second Golden Age, during which commerce flowed freely, east and west, while philosophers, artists, priests, soldiers and merchants plied their trades in security and good order.

Between Patna and Kabul there was a Grand Trunk Road, with distance-stones and posting-houses along its whole extent. "Its value, from a commercial as well as a strategic



point of view, must have been enormous. By means of it troops could be moved from Pataliputra to the farthest confines of the empire; it joined up all the great cities—Taxila, Kanauj, Hastinapura, Prayaga—with the capital, and by it trade was immensely facilitated. Goods from the Golden Chersonese and beyond, silk from Seres, Gangetic muslins, spices from Arabia, specie from the West, all poured into the bazaars of Pataliputra, and caravans could pass uninterrupted from the Ganges to the Khaibar.”<sup>1</sup>

The prosperity of the foreign trade is attested by the elaborate regulations made by Chandragupta for the entertainment of foreign merchants. In all the chief cities of the Kingdom a special committee of the Imperial Foreign Office looked after ambassadors and all kinds of lesser travellers, attending to them when sick, and in the event of death despatching their goods to their relatives abroad. Other special committees of the Government supervised trade-guilds and industries, managed census reports, registered births and deaths, checked weights and measures, watched against the adulteration of food, and levied a sales tax of 10 per cent. on everything sold in the bazaars.

Yet there were jarring notes, to our way of thinking, in this harmony of culture and prosperity. The rite of suttee was already old when Alexander took Taxila. In Chandragupta Maurya’s empire it was also common, as was the killing of girl babies, for we are told that the committee in charge of the census did all in its power to check this horrible custom. Suttee, on the contrary, was not forbidden, and continued to prevail (though it was an aristocratic rather than a common practice) for twenty-one centuries, until it was abolished in A.D. 1829.

Nevertheless the virtues of the Hindus were many, and were noticed by many travellers. The subjects of Chandragupta, unlike their descendants, rarely went to law, and made

<sup>1</sup> *Intercourse between India and the Western World*, by H. G. Rawlinson (Cambridge University Press, 1926). Pataliputra is Patna; Prayaga, Allahabad; the Golden Chersonese Assam and Burma; Seres, probably China. I am indebted to this author, as well as to Vincent Smith, for the account of Chandragupta’s administration.

no written contracts. Locks were not required on doors, since everyone was honest. Women were chaste, men brave, sober and industrious. Both sexes dressed well, in flowered muslins embroidered with jewels. Disputes were settled by the local *panchayet*, or council of five elders. The King maintained an elaborate court, and was generally attended by a bodyguard of Greek girls, who cooked his food, served his wine, and accompanied him in his chariot, heavily armed, whenever he rode abroad.

Chandragupta's son, Bindusara, was as interested in foreign affairs as his father. He wrote to Seleukus asking to be sent some raisins, some Greek wine, and a philosopher. (The wine and raisins arrived, but no Sophist.) From China, Egypt, Syria and Greece came diplomats and merchants to the court at Patna, where there were "wonders with which neither Memnonian Susa in all its glory nor the magnificence of Ekbatana can hope to vie; indeed, only the well-known vanity of the Persians could imagine such a comparison."<sup>1</sup>

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THE great Asoka (if our chronology is correct, which is by no means certain) must have been a boy of twelve when his grandfather Chandragupta died. At the age of eighteen he was sent out by Bindusara to Ujjain, to act as Viceroy there.

Although he was not the first monarch in history to abjure war (Akhenaten had similar ideals, and similar misfortunes attended the end of his reign), he was one of the earliest and most saintly of pacifists.<sup>2</sup>

He was crowned in 270 B.C. (after a somewhat murky adolescence during which tradition alleges that he killed many of his family in contesting the throne) and inherited the empire of his grandfather Chandragupta, which

<sup>1</sup> Æolian, quoted by H. G. Rawlinson in *Intercourse between India and the Western World*.

<sup>2</sup> From *Dogs of War* (Gollancz, 1934). It has seemed to me unnecessary to rewrite a passage which describes the Emperor to the best of my ability. For fuller information the reader is recommended to *Asoka*, by Radhakumud Mookerji (Macmillan, 1928).

extended from Persia along the Hindu Kush and the Himalayas to Patna, and as far south as Madras.

Five years later he was converted to Buddhism. In 262 B.C. he sent his army on its first and last conquest, that of the Kalinga tribes living in the south-east of India. Shocked by the casualties in this war (100,000 killed, 150,000 deported, and as Asoka sympathetically observes, "suffering to the civilian population by violence, slaughter, and separation from their loved ones"), he became a changed character and espoused the doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa*) towards men and animals.

Henceforth there was to be no more war throughout his domains, and no cruelty to any living thing. These principles he enunciated in fourteen rock edicts and seven inscriptions carved upon pillars, which remain to rouse the admiration of all right-thinking people.

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"DIRECTLY after the conquest of the Kalingas, the Beloved of the Gods (that is, Asoka) became eager in the pursuit of righteousness. The chief conquest is not that by force, but by righteousness.

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"WHERE an independent country is forcibly reduced it is very painful and deplorable to His Sacred Majesty that there should be slaughter and deportation of the people.

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"THIS is my wish in regard to the borderers: that they may understand that the King desires that they should be free of fear of him, that they should trust him, that they should receive from him happiness rather than sorrow, that they should understand that the King will tolerate in them what can be tolerated . . . that they should further understand that the King is to them even as a father, that he feels for them even as he feels for himself, and that they are to him as his children.

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"EVEN those forest peoples who have come under the dominion of His Sacred Majesty he seeks to win over to his way of life and thought. Indeed, His Sacred Majesty desires freedom from harm, restraint of passion, impartiality and cheerfulness to all living beings.

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"LOVE is won in moral conquests. That love may indeed be slight, but His Sacred Majesty considers it productive of great fruit in the world beyond. For this purpose has this religious edict been indited, that my sons and great-grandsons should not think that a new conquest ought to be made . . . that they should relish forbearance and mildness of punishment, and that they should consider only that as a conquest which is a moral conquest.

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"NOT a single living creature should be slaughtered and sacrificed. Nor should any merry-making<sup>1</sup> be held, for His Sacred and Gracious Majesty sees much objection in merry-making.

\* \* \* \* \*

"FORMERLY, in the kitchen of His Sacred and Gracious Majesty many hundreds of thousands of living creatures were slaughtered daily for the purpose of making curries. But now, while this religious edict is being inscribed, only three living creatures are slaughtered; two peacocks and one deer; and the deer, too, not regularly.

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"THE caponing of cocks is not permitted. The living must not be nourished with the living.

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<sup>1</sup> According to i.r. Radhakumud Mookerji this edict probably alluded to country fairs, with fights between elephants, stallions, cocks, etc.

“TO-DAY, in consequence of the practice of morality by His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King, the sound of the war drum has become not a call to battle but a call to righteousness.

“SIN must be trodden down.

“MY highest duty is the promotion of the good of all. There is no higher work than the promotion of the commonweal. My exertions are made so that I may discharge my debt to all living beings, and that I may make them happy in this world, and that they may attain heaven in the world to come. For this purpose is this religious edict inscribed, that it may last for ever, and that my sons and grandsons and great-grandsons may follow it, for the good of all. But this is difficult of achievement, except by great and sustained effort.”

INDEED difficult of achievement, O sagacious monarch! Your hope of universal peace, founded on right rather than might, still survives as an aspiration.

But it was not fulfilled in practice even in your son's time. The war drum became again a call to battle rather than a call to righteousness. Before you died you were practically a prisoner in the hands of your chief officers, and a pensioner of your grandson, who sent you for your nourishment no more than half an *amalaka* fruit<sup>1</sup> on an earthen plate.

Your descendants again ate roast peacock and venison. Eventually even the Buddhist creed, which you lifted from obscurity to be the light of Asia, was conquered by the Brahmins.

A thousand years later, the beef-eating, marauding Mongols came out of the north. They had jolly hunting parties, and did not attempt to tread down sin.

<sup>1</sup> The emblic myrobalan, a kind of small plum, with diuretic and laxative properties, beneficial in chronic catarrh.

Akbar gave the land good government, so that there was peace and plenty for several centuries. Then another reformer arrived, Aurungzeb, the snake of the Chagatai clan, who writhed and twisted until he gained the Peacock Throne of Delhi, and tried to reform so many people that the Moghul Empire also began to go downhill. . . .

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ASOKA practised what he preached in such a vivid and original manner (he was the first propagandist in history to write in a way to be understood by the people, following Buddha, who spoke to the masses in their own language) that he extended the horizon of Buddhism far beyond his kingdom, to sweep the known world, and gave the impetus to much that is great in Hindu art. Compare Alexander with Asoka, and you may discern in epitome the characteristics of two civilisations. Alas, that neither genius had successors to carry on and complete the glory and stability that might have been!

Soon after Asoka's death, in 231 B.C., a new wave of invaders began to infiltrate—and then pour in—from the north. The Scythians and White Huns came, like the Aryans, from Central Asia, but from a more easterly quarter: the desert of the Gobi, perhaps, whence were to come still later the terrible horsemen of Tamerlane.

From the first century B.C. to the sixth century A.D. we can see in India two great but semi-mythical Kings—Arthurian figures—resisting the inroads of barbarism: Vikramaditya of Ujjain, whose name means “a very sun in prowess,” and from whom dates the *Samvat* era (57 B.C.), and King Salivahana, from whom dates the *Saka* era (A.D. 78). Both these eras are commonly used by Hindus in computing dates, the former chiefly in the north, the latter in the south.<sup>1</sup>

In the confusion of these centuries there is little that is not nebulous to our eyes. A Greek King, Menander, came down from Kabul about 155 B.C., conquering the country as far

<sup>1</sup> The Moslems, of course, date events from *Al Hijra*, July 16th, A.D. 622, when Muhammad left Mecca on the journey that was to change the face of the world.

south as Patna. He entered into a famous philosophical discussion with the Buddhists: St. Thomas appears on the scene, somewhere in Afghanistan, in an endeavour to convert India to Christianity, but his date and movements are unknown.

Kanishka, who reigned in Peshawar about A.D. 125, became known as a second Asoka: under his patronage flourished a well-known school of Buddhist art in Gandhara. A mighty empire was Kanishka's, but the story of swift decline is ever the same: his successors succumbed to the White Huns, and we hear no more of this dynasty.

Another great King, Samudragupta, whose ancestors were neighbours of Buddha, seized the throne of Patna (A.D. 326) and conceived the project of conquering all India. He crossed the great barrier of the Vindhya hills, penetrating beyond Madras, the farthest limit reached by his predecessor, Chandragupta Maurya. With Samudragupta begins another Golden Age, for the arts of India flourished, the King himself was a poet and philosopher, the people were prosperous, and Sanskrit literature was in its classical period.

In the far west Rome had risen to her glory, and was already declining. The Very Sun of Prowess was ruling India when Cæsar crossed the Straits of Dover to invade England (55 B.C.). The revolt of Spartacus and the crucifixion along the Appian Way of 6,000 of his followers (A.D. 71) coincides roughly with the era of King Salivahana. In A.D. 98 Trajan received an Indian Ambassador in Rome. By the time of Samudragupta, Byzantium was fortifying herself against the Tatars, Vandals and Visigoths.

Between A.D. 406 and 411 a Chinese Buddhist made a pilgrimage to his Holy Land, and has left us an interesting account of his travels and adventures. He was followed nearly 250 years later by another eminent Chinese Buddhist, "The Master of the Law" (Hieuen Tsiang), who visited the scenes of Buddha's birth and death between A.D. 630 and 640, during the reign of King Harsha, who came from the district now known as Ambala, and conquered the greater part of the Indian peninsula.

Harsha is said to have commanded an army of 60,000 war-

elephants<sup>1</sup> and 100,000 cavalry. He was a warrior King, yet the doctrines of Buddhism as expounded by the Master of the Law appealed to him greatly (the Master preached the "Greater Vehicle" doctrine, opposed to the older, simpler doctrine of Ceylon, known as the "Lesser Vehicle"), and he gave orders that if anyone spoke against Hieuen Tsiang his tongue should be cut out, which led to the greatest possible unanimity of opinion.

The great Universities of Taxila and Nalanda (the latter near Patna) were enchanting abodes, according to the Chinese visitors. The Master of the Law describes the pavilions of Nalanda as decorated with coral: "The soaring domes reached up to the clouds and the pinnacles of the temples seemed to be lost in the morning mist. All round pools of translucent water shone with the open petals of the lotus flower. Here and there the lovely *kanaka* trees hung their deep red blossoms, and groves of dark mango trees spread their shade between them."

In January, A.D. 644, Tsiang witnessed a vast assemblage of people at Allahabad, where the sacred waters of the Jumna and Ganges mix their blue and green together. The festival is now known as the Kumbh Mela, and to it come, every twelve years, no less than two million people to bathe at the junction of the holy rivers. Hieuen Tsiang estimates the crowd in his day to be half a million. Then as now there was an enclosure within a reed fence, banners, processions, feasting, naked ascetics, and rajahs in their jewels. Eighteen Kings attended the festival when the Master of the Law was present.

On the first day, in a thatched temple within the enclosure, a statue of Buddha was installed, and the most costly of the articles and vestments were distributed. Choice meats were also provided, and on every side flowers were scattered and sweet music was heard.

On the second day a statue of the Sun God was installed, and precious gifts were again distributed, but not so many as on the first day. A similar distribution took place on the

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps 600 was the real number.



third day, when a statue of the mighty Iswara was installed.

On the fourth day alms were distributed to 10,000 monks. They were seated in a hundred rows, and each of them received a hundred pieces of gold, a linen garment, and divers meats and drinks, as well as perfumes and flowers.

The fifth distribution was to the Brahmans, lasting twenty days; the sixth to the heretics, lasting ten days; and the seventh to naked mendicants from distant countries, lasting ten days. The eighth lasted for a month, the recipients being the poor, the fatherless, and the friendless.

By this time the royal treasure, the accumulated wealth of five years, was completely exhausted. There was nothing left to the King but his elephants, horses, and weapons of war, which were needed for the chastisement of disorderly people and the protection of his kingdom. His royal robes, his necklaces, ear-rings, bracelets, the wreath on his crown, the pearls about his neck, and the carbuncle which shone in the centre of his head-dress, all these he gave in charity, withholding nothing of all that he possessed.

Having thus disposed of his worldly goods, the King begged of his sister a piece of threadbare cloth, and covering himself with the same, worshipped the Buddhas of the ten regions. Transported with joy and exultation, he joined his hands and cried: "While amassing these treasures, I have been in perpetual fear lest I should be unable to guard them securely. But now that I have deposited them in the field of happiness, I know them to be safe for ever. In all my future existences may I thus gather wealth for the help of my fellow men, and so attain, in all their fulness, the ten divine faculties."

Harsha followed faithfully the Hindu tradition of religious toleration and world renouncement. Indeed, there is little he said which Mr. Gandhi might not say to-day. Unlike the Mahatma, however, Harsha's vow of poverty was not sustained, for we learn that on the conclusion of the ceremonies

the eighteen Kings collected from their subjects many valuable articles, including the King's royal robes, his necklace, and other crown jewels, and gave them back to him.

Taxation was light in those days, according to the Master of the Law, and every man could keep his worldly goods in peace. Labour on public works was duly paid for. There were wars, it is true, but throughout the centuries these did not greatly disturb the life of the countryside or the life of the artists and philosophers.<sup>1</sup>

"*It is a far cry to Delhi*" is a very ancient proverb in India. Whatever King may reign, the plough must be speeded and the harvest gathered. And whatever king may reign the Aryan gods are always close to the Hindus, in the air they breathe, in the brightness of the Indian morning, the sun at noon, and the magic of moonlight.

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EXTRAVAGANT praise has sometimes been accorded to Sanskrit literature, much of which is sententious and ornate by Western standards. Nevertheless it contains some of the great thinking and great poetry of the world. The Bhagavad Gita, for instance (400 B.C.), which is embedded in the colossal epic of the Mahabharata (eight times longer than the Iliad and Odyssey combined), contains passages of the greatest beauty, and a lofty exposition of the Yoga teaching, which was afterwards summarised in the famous Aphorisms of Patanjali (200 B.C.).

In art the glorious Ajanta frescoes and the amazing sculptures of Konarak disclose a civilisation far more sensitive to æsthetic values than existed during the early Middle Ages in Europe. In mathematics, astronomy, and medicine India taught us most of what we began to develop at the Renaissance. Our numerals, so much superior to any in previous use, are Aryan, adopted by the Arabs. The decimal system was described by Bhaskaracharya (A.D. 114) long before it appeared in the writings of the Greeks, and the

<sup>1</sup> Megasthenes noted a ploughman driving his furrow within arrow-shot of a battle, and during the Sepoy Mutiny in 1857 an observer noticed peasants tilling their fields alongside the fighting.

value of  $\Pi$  was calculated in India a thousand years before it was known in Europe. In short, civilisation did not begin with Greece and Rome.

Modern India is still rooted in her Aryan past, and blossoming anew from that stem. Great modern mathematicians such as Ramanujau, great scientists such as Jagadish Bose, great philosophers such as Radhakrishnan, great poets such as Tagore, are all in the old tradition, and they have young successors.

This Aryan past, however, is far from us, in time and mental climate. We in the West have developed along other lines, which we considered more progressive; but we may have to reconsider this opinion and retrace our steps. If so, it is well that we should know more—much more than I can print here—of India's history and her high philosophies.

Harsha died in A.D. 648, and with him seems to have dissolved once again that impalpable cohesive force which makes nations out of races. From this date until the Moslem invasions of A.D. 664 and 711 (achieving no important results until Mahmud made his first raid from Ghazni in A.D. 999) we see India in the hands of warring chieftains, continuing its work and play, regardless of the rise and fall of dynasties.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RISE OF THE CRESCENT

THE first wave of that tremendous upheaval which began in Arabia with the declaration that there is no God beside God, and that Muhammad is His Prophet, lapped against the shores of Sind only a few years after the Prophet's death (A.D. 632), but it was not until A.D. 712 that there was a successful invasion of India proper. This reached as far as Multan, but quickly receded again.

The Arabs of the eighth century were busy conquering Spain in the west and Khiva in the north: they did not turn their attention to India until later, and then it was to the south, and for trade rather than for occupation. A colony of Moplahs (as they are now called) still exists in the south-west corner of the peninsula who are the descendants of Arab merchant adventurers from the valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates.

In the tenth century, however, a clever slave-boy of Turkestan, with an inferiority complex, as we would now say, began to dream about the conquest of India. He must have been endowed with brains as well as beauty, for he laid the plans which later were to grip the imagination of all the freebooters of Central Asia. When Subaktagin succeeded to the command of the Amir who had adopted him at Ghazni, he led his men down to Peshawar. That was the furthest he reached on the road to Delhi, but his son and successor, the famous—or infamous—Mahmud of Ghazni (born 976, died 1030), plundered India sixteen times during his reign of thirty-three years.

Eastward, across the rocky uplands of Waziristan, lay a teeming and fertile land, and an old Hindu civilisation enfeebled by fratricidal quarrels; all the treasure of India lay waiting to be plucked like the long grapes in the gardens of Ghazni. So Mahmud raised the green banner of the Prophet and called on his bandits to follow him.

They came in, troop by troop, until there was a horde of them, travelling light on their ponies, living on mare's milk and dried horseflesh, with their shields on their backs and their spears under their left knee. They carried longbows for dismounted attack, with a range of 200 yards or more, and cross-bows for use in saddle. Their discipline was good, and they were well officered, for they had learned by practical experience in forays against their neighbours that mobs can never win battles. Before them went the yak-tailed standards of their chiefs, and kettle-drums playing a ruffle and flam. Behind them came the baggage-camels, to carry the loot, and soothsayers to prophesy their lucky days, story-tellers and slave boys to pass their idle hours. The passes were open, and the plains verdant with good pasture. Each expedition ended by further strengthening the Moslem hold on India.

The sixteenth foray (A.D. 1024) was directed against the great temple of Somnath, on the coast of Kathiawar. It entailed a march of a thousand miles, beyond the fertile plain of the Punjab and across the dangerous desert of Marwar, but the promised booty was vast, for Somnath was then the richest shrine in India, with an endowment of the revenue of 10,000 villages.<sup>1</sup>

Mahmud moved so quickly that the Hindu chiefs were unable to combine. Nevertheless, they fought gallantly for three days near the sea, leaving 5,000 of their army dead by the beach before they escaped in boats. When the Afghans forced their way through the dead and dying to the central altar of the temple, they found there nothing but the phallic emblem of Siva, Lord of Birth and Death, worshipped in India then as now, with rites that were ancient even in Mahmud's day.

A jewelled lamp, swinging from a huge gold chain, weighing three-quarters of a ton, lit a scene whose drama still delights the story-tellers of Islam. In the corridors outside panic reigned. Temple elephants were trumpeting and

<sup>1</sup> Jaganath at Puri on the Bay of Bengal now has the reputation of the richest shrine, and draws its revenues from pilgrims throughout the whole peninsula. There is a cellar there knee-deep in pearls.

dancing-girls were shrieking. Within stood the conquerors amidst the flowers and incense and jewels of the holy of holies, facing the priests of Somnath. The Brahmins besought Mahmud not to cast down the idol. Let him spare the god, they begged, and take everything else.

Mahmud's captains were inclined to agree. The priests knew where the treasure was. To antagonise them seemed bad business. But Mahmud cried: "In the Day of Resurrection let it be said: 'Where is that Mahmud who destroyed the great *lingam* of Siva?' and not: 'Where is that Mahmud who sold it to the heathen for gold?'" And whirling his mace above his head he broke the idol in pieces, when out gushed a store of rubies like splinters of iced wine, and emeralds like sprays of myrtle, and pearls as big as pigeon's eggs.

For a few years thereafter Ghazni became a centre of luxury and learning. Mahmud was a patron of the arts as well as a dashing cavalry leader, and he attracted the Persian poet Firdousi to his court. They quarrelled over money matters, however, and Firdousi wrote some scathing verses which alleged that his patron was mean and a bastard. Mahmud eventually forgave him, which indicates considerable liberality of mind, and sent him some bags of gold, but it was too late: as the messengers arrived, the body of the poet was being carried to the cemetery. The tradition remains that the Idol Breaker was avaricious, and another great poet, Saadi, has moralised upon the dying King, who had gained so much worldly gear and was yet constrained to leave it all.

Feeble sons succeeded Mahmud, who were unable to keep his wealth or hold the lands he had conquered. They lost Ghazni itself, in A.D. 1152, to the men of another hill town, Ghor; and it was a Ghor chieftain, Muhammad of that clan, who led the next great Moslem invasion of India.

The history of these invaders, and of the Rajput chivalry which opposed them, seem very distant to us compared with the contemporary pictures we can form of Charlemagne being crowned at St. Peter's on Christmas Day, 800: Harouner-Raschid sending an elephant and the keys of the Holy Sepulchre to the Emperor of the West; William of Normandy

with his invasion barges grounding at Pevensey beach, and defeating Harold, fighting on two fronts; the first Crusade in 1095; Saladin capturing Jerusalem in 1187; and St. Francis preaching to the birds at Assisi. The doings of Ghor Kings, Slave Kings, Khiljis and Lodis, and the sack of Delhi by the terrible lame Mongol, Tamerlane, appear to us veiled in fantasies of blood, though they must have been real enough to the people who suffered by them.

Only when Baber (1483-1530) tells us in his own amusing way how he won the Indian Empire, do these deeds come alive for us, probably because Baber founded the dynasty which the British supplanted. But to educated Indians the adventures of Muhammad of Ghor and Prithwi Raja, of Aybek the "Moon Lord," of Queen Raziya and her Abyssinian friend, and of Ghiyas-ud-din Tuglak's quarrel with the Khwaja Sahib, are household stories such as those we tell of Boadicea and of good King Alfred.

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ON his first expedition to Delhi, in 1191, Muhammad of Ghor sustained a smashing defeat, and barely escaped with his life. He returned to Ghazni, severely wounded, and for two years devoted himself to raising a new army and training it in aggressive battle drill. Meanwhile the Rajputs, who should have been looking to their defences, were quarrelling amongst themselves.

The Chauhan Raja of Delhi had celebrated the Horse Sacrifice which entitled him to be known as Prithwi Raj, the Lord of all Hindus; but the Rahtor Raja of a neighbouring city claimed the title for himself, and decided to celebrate a feast which would assert his supremacy.

This ceremony coincided with the *swayyam-vara* (own-choice) or wedding feast of the Raja's beautiful daughter Sangagota, when she would adorn the husband of her choice with a necklace of marigolds. All the neighbouring Rajahs were invited to come, and it was a condition of the invitation, well understood amongst the Rajputs, that all who took part in the feast, even to the cooks and waiters, must be of royal blood, so that all the guests would acknowledge

by their presence the Rahtor Raja as their overlord instead of the Chauhan Raja. The Chauhan Raja was invited, but naturally did not come. So a clay statue was made of him as door-keeper, than which no office could be lower.

Princess Sangagota entered in her wedding robes, marigolds in hand, and looked round the company with a defiance in her mien which her father and the guests may have mistaken for timidity. None knew on whom her choice would fall.

To their amazement, she threw the garland round the neck of the clay door-keeper, and at this instant the Chauhan Raja, whom everyone believed to be in Delhi, strode into the room, seized her, and carried her off to where a troop of his cavalry awaited him.

The feast at Kanauj broke up with lamentation and woe and vows of vengeance. The Rahtor Raja sent his daughter's wedding clothes after her, but he sent also a letter to Muhammad of Ghor, inviting the Afghan to chastise his rival. Muhammad needed no pressing: he had long been preparing a bloody retribution for his defeat. So when the day of battle came, the Chauhan Raja stood alone. His elopement was a gallant exploit, but it cost him the empire.

Shortly before the coming of Muhammad, he had dreamed that a war elephant had trodden on his chest. Sangagota knew that this portended the crushing of the Rajputs. "O Sun of the Chauhans," she cried, "in glory and in pleasure who has tasted as deeply as thou? To die is destiny, and to die well is to live for ever. Think not of self, but of immortality. Let the sword divide the foe, but I will be your half-body. I will share your joys and sorrows. I am the lake, and you are the swan: what are you when absent from my bosom?"

The Chauhan Raja knew that he would fight his last fight, and Sangagota that the drum-beats of the gathering army were her death-knell. She helped her lord into his armour, though her fingers fumbled with his harness, so hungrily did she seek his eyes. As was the Rajput custom, the Chauhan Raja wore the saffron clothes of a bridegroom for this battle, for he was seeking death as a bride. Recklessly he rode upon



the Moslem spears, crying "*Prithwi Raj ki jai!*" ("Victory to the Supreme Lord!").

The romance was ended, and Sangagota saw him no more on earth. Decked in her marriage dress, with the jewels he had given her, she mounted the funeral pyre and went to meet him through the flames.

From that day of conquest and disaster, until 1857, when Hodson brought the last Great Moghul captive through the streets of Delhi, a Moslem has reigned in the capital. But the Hindus never forgot—have not now forgotten—their days of glory. The battle-cry of the Delhi mutineers of 1857 was that of the Chauhan Raja: "*Prithwi Raj ki jai!*"<sup>1</sup>

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WHEN Muhammad of Ghor was called to his fathers, he was succeeded by a favourite slave, Aybek, who took the title of Kutb-ud-din, and began to build the famous Kutb Minar, the tallest minaret in the world. He was killed by a fall from his horse while playing polo in Lahore, and was succeeded by another slave, Altamish, the third and greatest Sultan of the Slave Dynasty, who completed the tall minaret, and was recognised by the Caliph of Baghdad as sovereign of India.

Altamish had a number of incompetent sons, but a brilliant daughter, Raziya, whom he nominated as his successor. She scandalised the Moslem generals by wearing man's clothes, giving audience to her subjects with face unveiled, and allowing her Abyssinian Master of Horse to lift her by the armpits into her saddle. Nevertheless she reigned as Sultan for more than three years, the only Queen of Delhi until Victoria's time. But her generals were always on the edge of revolt, and eventually they imprisoned her. Then she married her jailer, and led an army against them. Her end was sad, and somewhat similar to that of the brave Hindu Queen of Jhansi, who fought against the British in 1858. After her defeat, Raziya begged some food from a peasant; he gave it to her, and she fell into a deep sleep. Then the peasant saw the gleam of gold and pearls beneath

<sup>1</sup> *When Kings Rode to Delhi*, by Gabrielle Festing (Blackwoods, 1919).

her man's clothes, and he killed her as she lay exhausted. "She was endowed with all the qualities befitting a King," a Moslem historian says, "but she was not born of the right sex, and so in the estimation of men all these virtues were worthless. May God have mercy on her!"

Three ineffectual sovereigns succeeded Raziya. The fourth was another slave, Balban, who had been her Chief Huntsman. Originally he had arrived in Delhi as one of a batch of boys sent to her father Altamish from Central Asia, and had been rejected by the Sultan as being small and thin. "For whom have you bought all these slaves?" asked the little fellow, quite unabashed by the monarch's disdain.

"For myself, of course," the King replied, in surprise.

"Then buy me for the love of God!" answered Balban, and his pert tongue pleased the old Sultan so much that he was allowed to remain at Court, and grew in strength and favour until he too climbed the throne.

During his reign Delhi was the resort of fifteen Central Asian Kings, and other eminent refugees from the Mongol fury<sup>1</sup> under Chengiz Khan, then sweeping east and west across the world from the mysterious desert city of Karakorum, leaving cities sown with salt and pyramids of human skulls in its wake. The hordes of Chengiz never crossed the Indus, but fugitives from the Mongol horsemen were many. Those were hard times, and Balban no exception to the spirit of the age. He was a just King, it is said, but so severe that "an elephant in his time would avoid treading on an ant." He died in 1287, and his successor was poisoned three years later.

In A.D. 1290 a Sultan of very different kidney to the alarming but efficient Balban ascended the throne of Delhi. He was an Afghan of the Khilji clan, who had been Adjutant-General to Balban's army, and was elected by the votes of the soldiers at the age of seventy. India then found a ruler who was so kind that he would certainly have given "the poor lion another Christian." "Clemency," as Ferishta observes, "is a virtue which descends from God, but the

<sup>1</sup> Including the poet Amir Khusru, known as "the honey-tongued parrot without an equal."

children of India did not deserve it. The sentiments of the Sultan having become public, no security was to be found. Housebreaking, murder, robbery and every species of crime were committed by those who found their living thereby; and the governors ceased to render any account of their administration." Eventually the poor old King was murdered by his son, Ala-ud-din, an ambitious man who called himself "the second Alexander" and contemplated founding a new religion.

Ala-ud-din Khilji was not the first or the last ruler who saw how precarious was the balance in India between jarring sects, but like other reformers he found that it was easier to defeat an army than to change a faith. Abandoning his religious projects, he concentrated on mundane matters, such as providing India with a postal service, in which he was extremely successful.

Following Ala-ud-din, two Sultans reigned for six years of increasing confusion and unrest. Nowhere had the Hindus really submitted to Moslem rule, and there was a constant threat from the Mongols to the north. As soon as the government passed into weak hands the country relapsed into an anarchy that became chronic until the sixteenth century.

The next Sultan of note was another Turkish slave, Ghiyas-ud-din Tughlak, who had risen to be the Governor of the Punjab under Ala-ud-din, and had routed the Mongols in twenty-nine battles. He seized power in A.D. 1320, from a low-caste Hindu who had become a Moslem, after having been a catamite to the last of the Khiljis.

Tughlak restored order for a time, and comparative prosperity. Like Balban he seems to have been tough and capable. When he heard that careless talkers had spread a report of his death, he said: "Since they have buried me alive in jest, let them be buried alive in earnest." And they were.

The ruins of his city are still visible near Delhi. While Tughlakabad was building, a famous saint of the Chisti family known as the "Commander of Assemblies" (whose descendants still live in Delhi and in Akbar's ruined city of Fatehpur Sikri) was also building a tank for himself in the capital. There seems to have been a labour shortage, for

Sultan and saint quarrelled about priority in workmen, whereupon the Sultan laid a curse on the water of the tank, and the saint prophesied that Tughlakabad would never be inhabited.

Before the city was finished, or the quarrel settled, the Sultan was called away on an expedition to Bengal, leaving Muhammad, his heir, as regent. Now Muhammad was a friend of the saint, and he saw to it that the tank was built by shifts working day and night. When the Sultan was about to return, friends advised the "Commander of Assemblies" to leave the capital, for the Sultan would certainly be annoyed to find the tank completed while the building of Tughlakabad had been neglected.

"It is a far cry to Delhi," said the saint, telling his beads.

Next day the friends returned, urging him to fly at once, for the Sultan was only a single march away. "It is still a far cry to Delhi," replied the saint.

The heir-apparent had constructed an elaborate pavilion in which to welcome his father on the outskirts of the city, and had ordered a feast and a parade of elephants to mark the auspicious occasion. So next evening Tughlak sat in the pavilion, with his favourite son by his side, who was not Muhammad. After dinner Muhammad begged leave to lead the parade in person.

Soon after he had left there was a horrible crash. An elephant had leaned against the pavilion, which collapsed in ruins, apparently at the first touch of the brute's forehead. Men ran hither and thither amidst fallen timbers and clouds of dust. There were no tools at hand, and it was a long way to Delhi, where they could be found, so that it was not till next morning that the old Sultan was discovered.

He was found dead, with arms outstretched, trying to shield his favourite son. Since then the saint's phrase, "*Dilhi dur ast*," has passed into common parlance.

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MUHAMMAD IBN TUGHLAK might have made a good Sultan, for he was versatile, devout and industrious, as well as a poet, mathematician, and expert callig-

raphist. Unfortunately he had one of those experimental minds which, when not supported by common sense, so often lead to ruin. One of his schemes (recently repeated by another disastrous ruler) was the transference of whole populations: twice he tried to move all Delhi to Central India, each time with lamentable results. Then he decided to abolish the gold standard and issue copper tokens instead, whereupon forgers waxed fat. He also tried to conquer China, with no better success than in his other ventures. Finally he insisted on trying some strange fish which had been caught in the Indus, and that was his last experiment.

Muhammad was succeeded by his cousin Firoz Shah (1351), whose mother was a Rajputni. Firoz reigned for thirty-seven years, the first half-Hindu, half-Moslem monarch in India. He built the Jumna Canal, the first large irrigation project attempted, and gave the country a breathing-spell of prosperity and contentment. But ten years of anarchy followed his reign, and then in 1398 came Timur-i-Lang, the war-lord of Samarkand, before whom the nations trembled.

He crossed the Indus in September 1398, and took Multan in November. By December 15th he had arrived at the plain of Panipat (fifty-five miles north of Delhi) with 100,000 Hindu prisoners, whom he put to the sword before attacking the capital, since he could not be cumbered with such a following.

Either Tamerlane feigned fear in order to draw on the defenders into a plain which suited his cavalry, or perhaps he was just naturally cautious. At any rate, the morale of the Mongols was shaken by the appearance of elephants. When the special correspondents who always accompanied the Mongol armies were asked where they would like to be during the battle, they replied promptly: "We will join the ladies." One of these men, who had never killed a sparrow in his life, was encouraged to help in the liquidation of the prisoners, and the chronicler notes with satisfaction that he accounted for "fifteen idolaters."

The Mongols never neglected security. The elephants *might* spread panic, so extensive precautions were taken

against them. In the ditch which the Horde always dug as a rallying point in the centre of the battle line, and occupied with household troops, Tamerlane caused groups of oxen to be tied, with hay entangled in their horns, so that they might be driven out to carry fire and confusion into the enemy ranks. Whether the oxen were used we do not know. The Delhi troops fought bravely, but it would seem that the issue of the battle was never in doubt.

Delhi was occupied on December 18th, and Tamerlane, after giving the matter careful thought for some days, decided that the inhabitants must become food for the sword. For three days his well-disciplined soldiers were turned loose to sack the city, while the conqueror went to the Great Mosque to return thanks for victory, afterwards taking a sight-seeing tour round the ruins of Delhi.

No record exists of how many were killed, or of the treasure taken, but we know that two hundred masons (master craftsmen then as now) were sent back to Samarkand to help in building a new mosque there, also ninety-seven teams of elephants—presumably a total of 776—whose appearance must have much amazed the inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> It was Samarkand's eighth and greatest triumph.

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THE last Tughlak King, who had fled from Delhi when his army was defeated, came creeping back to his desolate capital when the Mongols left. The empire now existed only in name, and North India was once again the prey for any conqueror with a disciplined army behind him.

For a century and a quarter, however, from the sack of Delhi in 1398 to the spring of 1526, no empire-aspiring monarch appeared; but in the empire of the mind much went forward.

Sankara, the greatest of the Vedanta philosophers, lived about A.D. 800. Centuries later the *Vedanta-sara* ("the

<sup>1</sup> The elephants were later used with good effect by Tamerlane against the Mamelukes and Syrians in 1400, and against the Turkish Sultan Bayezid in 1402, who had addressed him in a letter as "you bloody dog named Timur."

quintessence of the Vedanta") was composed by the famous Sadananda Ramanuja (A.D. 1200), who preached *bhakti*, the religion of love. His cult has spread throughout the world through his disciple Ramakrishna, and Ramakrishna's eloquent disciple, Vivekananda, who lectured all over the United States and Great Britain at the end of last century. Then towards the close of the fifteenth century appears a poor Moslem weaver of Benares, one Kabir, who preached the Unity of God. His death was mourned by Hindus and Moslems alike, and he was a greater conqueror than Tamerlane, because where he passed the flowers of friendship grew, instead of heaped skulls. From Kabir came the inspiration of Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith,<sup>1</sup> whose adherents became the conquerors of the Punjab in the eighteenth century.

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AT length, in the far north, a conqueror was born. He was the eldest son of the King of Khokand (east of Tashkent, in Russian Turkestan), who was descended through his father from Tamerlane, and through his mother from Chengiz Khan. Never has heredity been more clearly marked than in this child, who inherited the vigour and good health of Chengiz, combining them with the artistic capacities which were certainly latent in Tamerlane, though he never had time to develop them. The maternal grandfather of Zahir-ud-din, as the boy was called, was afflicted with a lisp, which made it difficult for him to pronounce the letter *z*, so he called the boy Baber, the Tiger, and Baber he remained, for the epithet fitted him well.

His accession was dramatic, as were many other moments of his crowded life. The King his father was in a loft of his mountain palace, watching his pigeons,<sup>2</sup> when the building collapsed, throwing the King over a precipice. In the typical, terse, vivid phrasing of Baber's *Memoirs*: "On

<sup>1</sup> See page 80.

<sup>2</sup> A pastime which delighted his descendants also. The Great Moghuls took their tumbler pigeons with them to Agra, Delhi and Kashmir. Akbar was especially fond of them.

Monday, the 4th day of Ramazan, Umar Sheikh flew, with his pigeons and their house, and became a falcon."

Baber (1483-1530) was only eleven years old when he ascended the throne of Khokand in 1494. He lost it in 1497, in an attempt to take Samarkand, recovered it in 1499, and became King of Kabul in 1504, when he was only just of age. By then, however, he had already compressed into his teens the experience of a whole lifetime in war and statecraft.

His *Memoirs* present a wonderful picture of the author and his surroundings, quite unlike the cloudy rhetoric of contemporary historians. His father "never hit a man without knocking him down." Of a rival chieftain he says that he "hadn't the pluck to stand up to a hen." Baber swam every river he met during his wanderings, including the Ganges. He was always hunting something: rhinoceros in Peshawar, wild asses in Afghanistan, deer in India. He drank heavily at times, and there are frequent entries in his diary such as "the view was so beautiful that I gave a party and got very drunk." But he never lost his wits in wine, or his intense appreciation of birds and flowers and scenery. Nor did he ever lose his ambition and his faith in his destiny.

In the autumn of 1525 he swooped on Peshawar, his son Humayun leading a contingent of allied Badakshanis. In the spring of next year he advanced to Panipat. The reigning Sultan of Delhi was an Afghan named Ibrahim Lodi, of whom Baber says that he was "a young man of no experience who marched without order, and engaged battle without foresight." Baber himself was then only thirty-eight.

At midday of April 21st, 1526, Ibrahim Lodi was decisively defeated, and the way was open to Delhi, where Baber found enormous booty. (The Mongol locusts had left nothing 125 years before, yet here again were riches in abundance!) Slaves were so cheap they were sold for half a dollar. Every soldier received liberal prize money, and the chief officers from £2,000 to £3,000 each. Every princess in the royal harem in Kabul was sent a dancing-girl, a gold plate full of jewels, four trays of coins, and nine sorts of cloth, all chosen by Baber himself.



But the conqueror, looking round his possessions, seems to have been disappointed. "Hindustan has but little to recommend it," he writes. "The people are not good-looking, they have no idea of the pleasures of society, they have no genius or generalising talent, neither polish of manner, amiability or sympathetic feeling; no decent houses, good fruit, ice, cold water. They have neither baths nor colleges; neither candles nor candlesticks; and if you want to read or write by night you must have a filthy half-naked fellow standing over you all the time with a glaring torch."

The Moghul army, like Alexander's, soon became homesick and asked to return, for May in Delhi can be very hot, and June is worse. But Baber was inflexible where his ambition was concerned. Moreover, a new threat was developing from the south, where Rana Sanga of Udaipur was collecting an army of 80,000 men and 500 war elephants. (Again the Rajputs were late: had they made common cause with Ibrahim Lodi they might have defeated the invader.)

As soon as possible Baber established himself at Agra as well as at Delhi, and consolidated both positions during the cold weather of 1526-1527.

It was at Agra, during this winter, that an attempt was made to poison him by the mother of Ibrahim Lodi, whom Baber had treated with great consideration after the battle of Panipat. The details of the affair turn a searchlight upon those dangerous days.

The Lodi Queen Dowager procured an ounce of poison and bribed a scullion to put it in some of Baber's food which was being prepared by native, *i.e.* Hindustani, cooks. "Well was it," Baber writes, "that Ahmad (the chief criminal) put the poison not into the cooking pot but on a dish. He did not put it in the pot, because I had strictly ordered the tasters to compel any Hindustanis who were present while food was cooking in the pots to taste the food. Our graceless tasters were neglectful while the food was being dished up. Thin slices of bread were put on a porcelain dish: on these less than half the packet of poison was sprinkled, and over this buttered fritters were laid. It would have been bad if

the poison had been strewn on the fritters or thrown into the pot. In his confusion the man threw the larger half into the fireplace.

"After the Afternoon Prayer, when the cooked meats were set out, I ate a good deal of a dish of hare, and also much fried carrot, took a few mouthfuls of the poisoned Hindustani food without noticing any unpleasant flavour, took also a mouthful or two of dried meat. Then I felt sick. Again and again my heart rose; after retching two or three times I was near vomiting on the tablecloth. At last I saw it would not do, got up, went retching every moment of the way to the closet, and on reaching it vomited much.

"Never had I vomited after food; and used not to do so indeed after drinking. I became suspicious, had the cooks put in ward, and ordered some of the vomit to be given to a dog, and the dog to be watched. It was somewhat out of sorts near the first watch of the next day, its belly was swollen, and however much people threw stones at it and turned it over, it did not get up; in that state it remained until midday; it then got up; it did not die.

"I ordered Paymaster Sultan Muhammad to watch the cook. When he was taken for torture, he related the above particulars one after another."

Baber had the cook skinned alive, the taster cut in pieces, and of the two women concerned in the crime one was trampled to death by an elephant, the other shot. Ibrahim Lodi's mother was kept in prison, but she managed to throw herself into the Indus and was drowned.

Meanwhile the Rajputs were massing. On March 16th, 1527, Baber fought the decisive battle of Khanwa (west of Agra), whereby he finally established his power.

Had it not been for his powerful personality the day would have been lost, for his skirmishers had met with several defeats three weeks previously, and the morale of his army was low. Also he was troubled by a pessimistic astrologer. "That evil-minded wretch, Muhammad Sharif," he tells us, "instead of giving me any assistance, loudly proclaimed to every person he met in the camp that at this time Mars was in the west and that whoever would engage coming from the

opposite quarter would be defeated. The courage of such as consulted this villainous soothsayer was consequently still further depressed. Without listening to his foolish predictions, I proceeded in taking steps which the emergency seemed to demand, and used every exertion to put my troops in a fit state to meet the enemy." He sent saboteurs and a guerrilla band into Rajputana to harass the enemy's rear; and he set up a number of dummy guns in his position, to raise the courage of his soldiers and to depress that of the enemy. One of his best real guns, "Old Victory," was able to fire at the prodigious rate of sixteen times a day!

In spite of his failing for drink he was a devout Moslem, and he now decided to make an effective repentance for his sins. "Noblemen and soldiers," he said to his army on the eve of the battle, "whoever comes to the feast of life must before it is over drink from the cup of death. How much better it is to die with honour than to live with infamy! As Firdausi says: 'Let fame be yours, since your body is death's.' The Most High has been propitious to us, and has placed us now in such a position that if we fall in the field we die the death of martyrs; if we survive we rise victorious, the avengers of the cause of God. Let us then, with one accord, swear on God's Holy Word that none of us will turn his face from this battle until his soul is separated from his body."

His friends took the Blessed Koran and swore on it.<sup>1</sup> Gold and silver goblets used for drinking were broken up and given to the poor; and most of the wine was poured on the ground, some being salted to make vinegar.

Next day the battle was joined. Never before had Baber's men had to face a Rajput charge, which swept down on them with lightning speed. Line after line of saffron-robed horsemen met their death on the Moghul spears, but ever new waves swept forward, so that the infantry was sorely shaken. At last, however, Baber ordered the great kettle-drum to roar

<sup>1</sup> Baber kept his vow until his death. In a subsequent letter he tells a friend: "The longing for a wine party had been infinite and endless these two years past, so much so that sometimes the craving for wine has brought me to the edge of tears."—*Baber*, by S. M. Edwardes (A. M. Phipot, 1930).

out its challenge: his shock troops went forward from the centre, while mounted bowmen outflanked the Rajput hosts. It was a well-timed counter-attack, and at that moment a traitor amongst the Rajputs went over to the enemy. Old Victory and the other guns were firing their fastest when the Moghul cavalry closed, and the enemy was "scattered abroad like teased wool, and broken like bubbles in wine."

While Baber was building a pyramid of skulls in the fashion of his forefathers, the pessimistic astrologer came up to offer his congratulations. "I poured forth a torrent of abuse upon him," says Baber; "and when I had relieved my heart of it, although he was heathenishly inclined, perverse, extremely conceited, and an insufferable evil-speaker yet, as he had been my old servant, I gave him a lakh<sup>1</sup> as a present, and dismissed him, commanding him not to remain within my dominions."

Baber was now master of India, and assumed the title of Ghazi—conqueror for the faith. But he did not enjoy his conquest long, for his tremendous vitality was on the wane. (Even lately, however, he had ridden 160 miles in two days, in the middle of the Indian hot weather.) He was suffering constantly from fever now, and perhaps the sudden break in his drinking habits had deranged his system.

His end was as strange as the circumstances which brought him to the throne of Khokand. Humayun, his favourite son, fell ill. The doctors could not cure him, but Baber had heard of a powerful spell.

Three times he walked round the bedside of Humayun, saying, "O God, if a life may be offered for a life, I, who am Baber, give my life and being for Humayun." Then he retired to pray, and was heard to exclaim, "I have prevailed!" That evening he fell ill, and three days later he was dead, having commended Humayun to his nobles.

<sup>1</sup> We do not know a *lakh* (100,000) of what. But the incident reveals Baber's shrewdness as well as his liberality. Prophets with a grievance can be dangerous.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PEACOCK THRONE

**H**UMAYUN (1508-1556) was the unluckiest and least capable of the Great Moghuls. He was Baber's favourite child, by Maham, the "Moon Lady," of whom the Tiger says little in his usually self-revealing *Memoirs*. He tells us that he was painfully shy with his first wife; so much so that he had to be driven to her by his mother "once in a month or forty days," but that was when he was very young, and very busy fighting. Maham he married later, and probably loved so well that he did not care to describe his feelings.

Humayun stumbled through a life full of misfortunes, and stumbled out of it when he tripped downstairs and broke his skull. Like his father, he was always ready to trust and to dare, but he never trusted the right people, or dared at the right moment.

He trusted his three brothers, to whom he gave three provinces, but they did not help him when his father's Afghan general in Bengal revolted. Humayun marched against Sher Shah boldly enough, but he was decisively defeated.

Moving large bodies of cavalry over a practically roadless country entailed complicated arrangements for fodder, and artillery and baggage trains needed boats for river crossings: questions of supply and transport governed strategy in those days as in these, and the general who could solve them won battles. Humayun was evidently not a good organiser, whereas Sher Shah proved his ability when he established himself at Delhi. Certainly it was well for India that Humayun was defeated, else Akbar might never have been born.

It was while on his way to Afghanistan, escaping with a few retainers across the Sind desert, that Humayun met his future wife, Hamida, the daughter of an Arab doctor of divinity attached to the household of one of his stepmothers.

Hamida was a slim girl of sixteen; he thirty-five, many times married, a King without a crown, and an opium addict into the bargain. Hamida refused him several times, saying (with a good deal of tact) that he was too tall: she wanted to marry "a man whose collar my hand can touch"—but Humayun was desperately in love, and eventually his stepmother persuaded her. They were married, and Humayun continued on his travels.

Nine months later, during days of terrible suffering, escaping always from foes—from Sher Shah's men or from the Rajputs—news came to the exiled Emperor that a son was born to him (October 15th, 1542) and that he was to be named Jalal-ud-din Akbar. The birth of a son was always celebrated in the House of Timur, but at the moment there was no imperial largesse to distribute. (Not that Humayun's pockets were entirely empty. He carried in his pocket the Koh-i-noor diamond, but that could not be converted into cash in the Sind desert.) He took a pod of musk, and distributed it among his chief followers, saying: "That is all the present I can afford to make you on the birth of my son, whose fame, I trust, will one day expand over all the world, as the perfume of the musk now fills this tent."

Hamida joined him later, with the baby and a faithful nurse (the "Moon Foster-mother" she was called, and her son was afterwards to die at the hands of this baby), and the four of them continued towards the city of Kandahar, which Humayun had given to his brother Askari. But their troubles had only begun. Askari not only refused to receive Humayun, but attacked his little party, so that he had to ride hard through the night in order to escape, taking Hamida on the back of his horse, but leaving the baby and nurse behind.

Askari looted his brother's camp, but looked after the baby and nurse, taking them first to Kandahar, and when he was ejected from there, to Kabul, where he put the child in charge of a great-aunt, who wept with pleasure because Akbar's little hands reminded her of her brother Baber. The old lady eventually patched up some sort of a peace between her descendants, so that Humayun and Hamida, after weary

years abroad, found their child and the Moon Foster-mother safe and sound in Kabul.

Fourteen years had passed in Humayun's wanderings. The usurper Sher Shah had died in Delhi, and had been succeeded by an incompetent son, and now there was the usual anarchy in Hindustan. Humayun's hour had come. As usual, again, there were those who doubted the wisdom of leaving their northern uplands, where spring was sweet and the people poor, for the wealth and heat and dust of the plains; while others, more adventurous, longed for a martyr's crown or the loot of Hindu temples. Guided by omens, Humayun decided to try his luck. He led a division of 15,000 horsemen through the Khyber Pass, galloped to Lahore, and before his fifteen years of exile were accomplished he was again Emperor in Delhi.

His reign was short, as his father's had been. Misfortune was always at his heels.

Next to Sher Shah's mosque in Delhi there was a library building on whose terrace the Emperor was sitting, on the evening of January 20th, 1556, watching the sunset. When the *muezzin* from the neighbouring minaret cried the hour of prayer, Humayun rose according to his custom, and after standing in reverence to the Lord of All Worlds, he walked to the steep and narrow stairway, which led down some thirty feet. On the top step he tripped, and fell headlong over the parapet. Within three days he was dead.

His tomb, built by Hamida and Akbar, is a noble building from which Sheh-jahan drew the inspiration for the Taj Mahal. Hamida and her lord lie there in peace, but the place has seen deeds of blood, and is haunted still by memories of "old unhappy far-off things. . . ."

\* \* \* \* \*

AKBAR was away in the Punjab when his father died, with Humayun's best general, Bairam Khan, who had been appointed his tutor and guardian. He was only fourteen years old when he became Emperor of India,<sup>1</sup> and probably

<sup>1</sup> Jalal-ud-din Akbar, born October 15th, 1542, acceded to the throne January 22nd, 1556, died October 5th, 1605.

had little say in the council of war which decided whether to retire on Kabul or to advance to Delhi.

Bairam Khan was determined to advance in spite of opposition from the other generals, and it was again at Panipat—where he had fought thirty years before under Baber—that he defeated the Hindu general sent against him by Delhi rebels. When the enemy commander was brought in wounded, he told Akbar to draw his sword and earn the title of Ghazi—"Defender of the Faith."

"How can I strike a man who is nearly dead?" said Akbar.

Bairam must have recognised Baber's grandson in these words, but nevertheless he sent the captive's head rolling. Akbar burst into tears, and never forgave him.

Already there had been trouble about Akbar's education. He had refused to learn to read or write, saying it was bad for the brain. And now he objected to cutting off a pagan's head! What next? Was the boy soft? If Bairam thought so, he was soon disillusioned.

Some three years later Akbar ordered a great hunting party, like the *kurultais* of Chengiz Khan. That—to the end of his life—was his first move in a campaign, as it had been the preliminary to the marches of his Mongol ancestors. Riding swiftly back to Agra he wrote to Bairam Khan: "Let our well-wisher withdraw from all worldly concerns, and taking the pilgrimage to Mecca on which he has been for so long intent, spend the rest of his days in prayer, far removed from the toils of public life."

Of course the old general revolted. He was speedily crushed, however, and taken prisoner, and brought before Akbar, who treated him firmly but not unkindly. He was allowed to go to Mecca with a suitable escort. Unfortunately he was murdered on the way, but certainly not with the connivance of Akbar, who was as generous as his grandfather had been to old servants.

The next revolt that Akbar was called upon to crush came from the Moon Foster-Mother's son, Adham Khan, who had been given a military command, and had carried out a mopping-up operation so successfully that he was now



suffering from an attack of swelled head. Both were very young—Akbar was only twenty—and Adham Khan seems to have seriously contemplated gaining the empire for himself. Akbar handled him with great tact, and forgave an attempt at mutiny, with a warning which Adham Khan disregarded. One night, while Akbar was asleep in the harem, Adham Khan swaggered into the hall of Special Audience with some Uzbek toughs, where the Prime Minister was reading aloud from the holy Koran, and stabbed him to death. Then he knocked at the door of the harem. Akbar jumped up in his nightshirt.

Adham Khan was sure that he was the better man; and there was some excuse for his self-confidence. The young Emperor was given to strange fits of abstraction, or moodiness. Soon after his accession, during a hunting party, he had ridden off alone on a high-mettled horse, and had sat down under a tree, like any Hindu yogi, letting his mount gallop away. Eventually the horse returned, and Akbar had taken this as an omen that he must come back to the world of men. But on returning to his companions he was in a curious, silent state, and had given orders that the hunt should be called off, and no beast harmed. That was surely the sign of an unbalanced mind? Again, he drank only water and was practically a vegetarian. True, he seemed to flourish on this diet, for he had killed a tiger single-handed and on foot, but—whatever thoughts may have flashed through Adham Khan's brain, they ended abruptly. He fell stunned by a blow from Akbar, who dragged him to the terrace and threw him over the battlements into the moat below.

Was Akbar soft? The blood of Tamerlane had answered. Looking over the parapet, Akbar saw that Adham Khan still breathed, so he sent his retainers down to bring him up and kissed him for old times' sake, and then threw him down again. This time he did not stir. When men examined the body afterwards, they said that it seemed as if his face had been smashed in by a mace; but it was no mace, but Akbar's fist.

Akbar himself went at once to the Moon Foster-Mother to explain to her how her son had met his fate. "You have

done well," she said, but what were words? She died soon after of a broken heart; and Akbar began to realise how cold and lonely was the road to Delhi.

For several years he was busy quelling rebellions on the part of his generals and relatives. When necessary he struck swiftly, as Baber had done, himself leading the cavalry charge; but he changed his strategy according to his adversary, as became one who was already a master of the art of war. When dealing with an incompetent brother in Kabul, he made a triumphant progress through his dominions, travelling slowly, with all the pomp of an immense Imperial camp, accompanied by a Jesuit priest. No doubt this was done chiefly to impress the foreigner, who would report to his friends in Portugal; but it also impressed all India, and was the occasion for some very pleasant hunting.

Again, when he heard that there was unrest in Bihar, and that the rebels thought themselves safe until the rainy season was over, he changed his plan of operations completely, and fitted out an army on barges, sailing down to Patna complete with elephants and heavy artillery. His arm was long, and although it did not reach over the Vindhya hills into the Deccan, every other part of India was soon conscious that there was an iron hand, such as that which had hit Adham Khan, ready to strike swiftly at rebellion.

Religious toleration and fair taxation, regularly collected, were the keynotes of his administration. He saw, early in his reign, that it would be impossible to rule without the co-operation of the Hindus, and that just as his ancestors had won their victories in war by superior discipline and organisation, so in peace these virtues could be harnessed to the task of unifying India.

His system of land revenue survives to this day, as also does the language in which his orders went out to the masses. Urdu means "camp": it was a "pidgin" language, compounded of Persian, Turki and Hindi, in which the officials talked to the peasants.

In conciliating the Hindus Akbar was sincere: he was not merely buying off rivals, but genuinely (often at the risk of his life and always at the peril of his influence) trying to

reconcile the two creeds for the good of the country and for the greater glory of God, as he conceived Him.

God was God, whatever name men called Him. He set the example of tolerance by marrying a Jaipur princess, and by marrying his son, afterwards Jehangir, to a Jodhpur princess. Another son (Murad) he entrusted to the Jesuits for his education. Out of 415 chief officials of Akbar's empire 51 were Hindus. He abolished the hated head-tax of "infidels." Amongst his closest friends were Birbal, a Brahmin musician, whom he promoted to be a Raja and a General, and Todar Mull, a Hindu of the merchant class, who became a brilliant Chancellor of the Exchequer. His two other closest friends were Faizi and Abul Fazl, sons of a free-thinking Sheikh; both of them afterwards adopted Akbar's theosophical religion, which he named the Din Illahi.

It was Todar Mull, the Chancellor, who adapted from old Hindu customs a regular system of survey for land revenue, by which each field in the country, was measured and recorded, and the Government share in its produce fixed, generally at one third. The taxes were heavy, being about three times what the Indian Government takes from the land to-day,<sup>1</sup> allowing for the difference in area and the purchasing power of silver, but they were fixed, so that the peasants knew where they stood. The total revenue of Akbar's empire, including the "cesses," or subsidiary taxes for militia and local services, is estimated to have amounted in our money to £42,000,000.

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**A**KBAR longed for sons, even as a Hindu longs for them, but the twins that were born to his Rajput wife, Mariam Zamani, died in infancy. In 1564 he made a pilgrimage to visit the renowned Sheikh Salim Chisti (a descendant of the "Commander of Assemblies" of Delhi) at the village of Sikri, near Agra, and Sheikh Salim suggested that the

<sup>1</sup> *A Brief History of the Indian Peoples*, by Sir W. W. Hunter (Clarendon Press, 1903).

Empress Mariam should stay at his shrine for her next confinement.

So it was that five years later, on August 10th, 1569, a man child was born at Sikri, who was afterwards the Emperor Jehangir,<sup>1</sup> followed by other sons in later years. In gratitude to the Sheikh, Akbar began to hold his Court at Sikri; and in the course of fifteen years he built a great city there, with an artificial lake six miles long and two miles broad on its north-west side. Many of its palaces and pavilions still stand, looking as if they had been built yesterday. We can see Akbar's secretariat, his mint, his polo-pony stables, his mosque with its huge Gate of Victory, and the Palace of the Winds, where he loved to discuss philosophy: every one of these beautifully proportioned buildings bears the impress of the terrific personality that brought them into being, and then abandoned them to the owls and jackals.

Terrific is a just adjective for the power that moved through Akbar. He was a great soldier and statesman, a deep thinker,<sup>2</sup> a masterly architect; also a keen gardener, pigeon-fancier, polo-player (playing sometimes at night with phosphorescent balls), swimmer, walker, and chess-player, and carried on these activities in the midst of all the cares (including a daily audience to his subjects) that beset an

<sup>1</sup> He was named Salim after the Sheikh, but to avoid confusion I have throughout referred to him as Jehangir ("The World-Grasper"), which was his title as Emperor. Similarly Jehangir's son, Prince Kurram, is here always called Shahjehan ("World-Lord").

<sup>2</sup> Although he could not read, he possessed a large Persian library, and had every book in it read to him. His chief reader, known as the Naquib Khan, was a learned historian, and became a State Councillor under Jehangir. Many Hindu sacred books were translated for Akbar into Persian by his friends Faizi and Abul Fazl. Only one signature of his is known, traced out with difficulty in a childish hand. Yet Baber, his grandfather, took pride in his calligraphy, and (typically) invented a new kind of writing which he called *Baberi-Khat*. Akbar's son Jehangir kept his diary daily in his own hand, but in addition there were fourteen official recorders, who kept notes of everything the Emperor said and did. Moghul edicts were sealed, and sometimes impressed with the whole royal hand; one such, by Shahjehan, shows very clearly the sensitive fingers of the builder of the Taj. Aurungzeb annotated State documents neatly in green ink.

ambitious Oriental ruler building up a vast empire. He needed scarcely any rest (three hours' sleep was sufficient) and wasted little time on meals, eating only once a day, generally a dish of rice and vegetables. One night he kept Montserrate, the Jesuit who accompanied him to Kabul, discussing the Second and Third Persons of the Trinity until dawn, yet soon afterwards he was to be seen supervising his cavalry crossing the Indus.

He was interested in everything, except women, who seem to have influenced him very little, except his mother Hamida, to whom he was devoted. After her death the chief influence in the harem was Salima, his first wife and first cousin, a Tartar by ancestry. She ruled the Imperial harem for many years after Akbar's death, until supplanted by Nur Jehan, Jehangir's lovely Persian wife.

\* \* \* \* \*

SURELY it must be possible, Akbar had thought in his youth, to discover the true religion. There was a right and wrong way of doing everything; why not of serving God? And having found the way, by diligent enquiry and experiment, then surely Indians would follow it, and waste no more time in conflict and persecution?

One of his experiments was to isolate some new-born children in a house in Fatehpur Sikri, where they were to be fed and looked after, but taught nothing and never spoken to. If they developed a religion, it would surely be that most natural to human beings. Unfortunately the children grew up dumb.

In 1578 he sent for the Vicar-General of the Jesuits, and cross-examined him so keenly that the good Father Pereira wrote to Goa to suggest that someone more learned than himself should attend the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> So it was that a young Neapolitan Jesuit of noble family, Ridolfo Aquaviva, arrived at Sikri in 1580, accompanied by a Spaniard, Antonio Montserrate, and a Persian Christian.

<sup>1</sup> Akbar had been greatly impressed by the news that two converts to Christianity in Bengal had been refused absolution for defrauding the Imperial revenue. *Akbar*, by Laurence Binyon (Davies, 1932).

The Jesuits could have sent no better man than the bespectacled, untidy, forthright Ridolfo Aquaviva, whose sincerity and unworldliness at once won Akbar's heart. He kissed the Bible, and put it reverently on his head, and offered the priest a large sum of money, which was refused. (But he was also worshipping the sun with the Parsees, studying the Vedanta with the Brahmins, and enquiring into the doctrines of the Sikhs and Jains.) The first discussions in which the Jesuits took part were with Moslem doctors on the subject of the Koran, and they ended by a challenge of ordeal by fire: each priest was to carry his sacred book into the flames, the winner being he who came out unscathed. Aquaviva refused, saying that his faith had no need of tests, but he told Akbar privately that he was willing to be burned, if the Emperor so ordered. Whereupon Akbar explained that there was a troublesome Moslem mullah whom he would dearly like to see burned alive; all Aquaviva had to do was to agree to the trial, and then the mullah would go to the stake first. Aquaviva was horrified. "If this man deserves punishment," he said, "why not punish him in a straightforward manner?"

Akbar must have chuckled. That was the sort of answer he never received from his courtiers, and it made him want to see more of the Jesuits. They attracted all that was best in him; but for all that his duty, as he saw it, was to govern India, and that could not be done by embracing a strange and unpopular religion, and divorcing all the wives he had married for political reasons. Yet at the end of his life he caused to be written on his great Gate of Victory at Fatehpur Sikri, long after he had abandoned the city of his dreams: "Said Jesus, on Whom be peace: 'This world is a bridge, pass over it, but build no house there!'"

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AKBAR was Emperor first, and a student of comparative religion only so far as it might help him to weld India into one country: seen in this light his enquiries into various creeds, and the foundation of the Din Illahi, fall into their proper perspective.

A strange thing happened, one Friday morning in 1582, when he ascended the pulpit of his mosque in Fatehpur Sikri, intending to preach the Din Illahi after the "bidding prayer."<sup>1</sup> He began to tremble, then slowly descended from the *mihrab*, beckoning to the Court preacher to continue the service.

He never renounced his interest in the Din Illahi, but from that moment until his death he knew that he could not make his views prevail, and was wise enough not to make any further direct attempt to force them on the people.

His friend Faizi has stated Akbar's faith in lines with a very modern ring:—

O God, in every temple I see those who seek Thee  
And in every tongue that is spoken Thou art praised.  
Awhile I frequent the Christian cloister, anon the Mosque,  
But Thee only I seek from fane to fane.  
Heresy to the heretic—dogma to the orthodox—  
But the dust of the rose-petal belongs to the heart of the perfume seller.

Four years later (in 1586) Akbar abandoned Fatehpur Sikri and never returned, except for one brief visit. The reason given was that the water supply was insufficient, but it may have been that the new city was bound up in his mind with the Din Illahi and with his hopes in his sons. In both he suffered grievous disillusion.

His eldest son, Jehangir, then seventeen, was a conceited puppy, and already fond of the bottle. Murad and Daniyal had also taken to opium and brandy when they were hardly out of the harem. His best friend, Raja Birbal, with whom he had so long discussed religion, was killed on the North-west Frontier. They had made a compact that whichever died first should return with news from the "other side." Perhaps Akbar found it unbearable to sit in that palace they had planned together in ardent youth, listening, listening, for a voice he loved and heard no more.

<sup>1</sup> Akbar, of course, was not preaching idolatry, which would have led to immediate rebellion, but a monistic theosophy. There was nothing in his Din Illahi which actually contradicted the precepts of Islam. As to the Hindus, he knew that they would have no particular objection to another god, having thousands already.

The capital was now established in Lahore, and Kashmir was occupied in 1587. By 1594 all the country north of the Vindhya hills acknowledged the rule of Akbar, as well as Sind, Kandahar, and Kabul. But the far south remained in a state of chaos. Akbar went there in 1600, but had to hurry back because Jehangir had revolted, seizing the treasury and arsenal at Allahabad, and even having his own coins minted.

Akbar's mother, Hamida, was devoted to Jehangir, and went out from Agra to try to reason with her grandson, but he refused to see her. Hamida was now nearing eighty years of age, but her spirit was still as undaunted as when she had wandered with her husband through Sind to the Persian Court and back to Delhi. What was the real reason, we may ask ourselves, which led Jehangir into this bitter opposition to his family? Was it only the usual ambition of an heir?

We shall never know what Hamida wanted to say to her grandson, but it is just possible that it concerned a thwarted love affair of Jehangir's.

Some years previously—in 1590, when he was twenty-one—he had fallen in love with a slip of a girl at a fancy bazaar in Lahore. Muhr-i-nisa, as she was called (meaning "The Seal of Womankind"), was then fifteen, and reputed to be the cleverest and prettiest girl in India. Afterwards she was known as Nur Zehan, "The Light of the World."

Her father, Mirza Ghyas-ud-din, had left Persia to seek his fortune in India with his wife and three children. While passing through Afghanistan a fourth child was born. The baby was a girl, and they did not see how they could be burdened with her, so—thus the story goes—they laid her by the roadside, where she was found by a merchant of the same caravan, who thought of adopting her. However, her mother came forward, and explained their poverty. The merchant thereupon helped the Ghyas-ud-dins with money, and eventually gave Mirza a letter of introduction to Akbar, who appointed him to an official position at his Court. He rose to be First Lord of the Treasury, and amassed a large fortune. His son, Asaf Khan, own brother to Nur Jehan,



also became a powerful Court official, and the father of Arjumand Banu Begum, who married Shahjehan.

Jehangir saw Nur Jehan at a booth where she was helping the Court ladies to sell their own handiwork. Tradition alleges that he asked her to look after a couple of pet doves, and that she let one of them fly away. "How did it happen, stupid?" asked Jehangir. "So, my lord!" she answered, setting the other free. Thereupon he fell madly in love with her, with all the intensity of an artist, and with all the instability of a dipsomaniac.

The course of love did not run smooth. Somebody thought it an unsuitable match, but why, we do not know. Hamida was head of the harem then. Was it she who sent Nur Jehan away to be married to a young Persian, Sher Afkan, who was given a job in Bengal?

Jehangir never forgot Nur Jehan. We may be sure of that, for in after years she practically ruled the Empire, and had her name stamped on the Imperial coinage. When he rebelled in 1600 Nur Jehan must have been in the background of his mind—and perhaps of Hamida's.

The worry of Jehangir's conduct caused Hamida to fall ill. Akbar was on his way to Allahabad to punish his rebellious son when he heard that his mother was dying. At first he thought the illness might be feigned; when he was assured it was not, he hurried back to Agra to be with her. After her death, life must have seemed very empty. He had no heart to attack Jahangir, whose military ability he despised, so he sent an envoy to him, who remained for some time in Allahabad and eventually induced him to make submission.

Jehangir returned to Agra, bringing with him a present of 400 elephants, knowing how his father enjoyed seeing the great beasts. He was received with every mark of public favour. Akbar led him by the hand out of the hall of public audience (not the present building, but one of wood, for the Fort was unfinished), but once they were alone he gave rein to his temper, punching the prince's head, and bunting his behind, while jeering at his simplicity for allowing himself to be lured to Agra.

The beating seems to have done Jehangir good. He was

kept for some time under doctor's orders, and managed to abate his craving for drink. While Akbar remained alive, he gave no more trouble. We may hope that the old Emperor, who was suffering now from dysentery (it is alleged due to some slow, irritant poison like diamond dust), never knew that the murder of his last surviving friend, Abul Fazl, had been planned by this faithless son of his.

While his father lay ill, Jehangir swore to the nobles of the Court that he would defend the Faith of Islam. On October 26th, 1605, he was admitted to the presence, and knocked with his forehead on the floor round which his father had so lately kicked him. The dying man could no longer speak, but he pointed to the Imperial turban and to the sword of Humayun; then he bade his son withdraw. Only a few friends were with Akbar when he died: his last audible words to them were to beg that no misunderstandings should exist between those who had shared his toils and been companions of his glory.

He had begun his reign in 1556, when India was split up into petty kingdoms: he left it in 1605 an almost united empire.

A great man he was, with a great heart in that stout, stocky body, with its abnormally long arms, and strong hands that refused to hold a pen, but could wield a sword or spear so well. And Jehangir, who had so much desired his death, wrote of him afterwards: "His manner and habits were quite different from those of other people, and his countenance was full of godlike dignity."

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THAT winter in Agra passed quietly, but in April 1606 Jehangir's eldest son, Prince Khusru, who was extremely popular with the people because of his good looks and generous ways, escaped from the palace, where he was closely watched, and started a rebellion. He had made the excuse that he was going to visit his grandfather's tomb at Shahdara, slipped past the guards, collected some retainers, and marched on Lahore, gathering a following on the way which eventually amounted to 12,000 men.

Jehangir followed him quickly, and sent spies and rumour-mongers into Lahore to confuse the rebels, whom he defeated with little difficulty. The punishments he inflicted were horrible.

Khusru tried to escape, but was caught at a river crossing and brought back in irons. Thus bound he was forced to follow his father on a ghastly triumphal entry into Lahore, between 800 of his followers who had been impaled at the city gate. As they writhed on spikes, moaning and begging for death, Jehangir said with a sneer: "Look at the salaams of your loyal subjects!"

Two of the chief mutineers were sewn into the skins of animals, one in an ass-hide, the other in an ox-hide, and paraded round Lahore on donkeys. The skins shrank in the heat, and the man in the ox-hide died in agony within a few hours. The occupant of the ass-hide survived (he was rich, and engaged to one of Jehangir's daughters), for the Emperor allowed the skin to be wetted occasionally; however, it began to putrefy on the second day, and stank so horribly that no one could come near him. Eventually he was released, and married his fiancée, for which honour he paid the Emperor £25,000.

Khusru was kept for a year in chains, then liberated, but only for a few weeks, because he was again accused of plotting. Historians differ as to whether he was then blinded by pricking his pupils with a red-hot wire, or whether his eyelids were sewn together. He died a prisoner a few years later.

Naturally Jehangir lost no time in tracing the "Seal of Womankind." Sher Afkan, her husband, was soon murdered, and Nur Jehan came to the capital. But for a long time she refused to put off her weeds of widowhood. It was only after Jehangir had reigned six years that she yielded to his entreaties, and was married to him in 1611, when he was forty-three and she about thirty-six. Thereafter, to the close of the reign, she is the dominant figure in an extraordinary network of plots and counterplots, with Jehangir sitting unconcernedly in the centre of the web, drinking hard, going out shooting, writing his diary, and admiring pictures, while everyone round him intrigued.

There is no doubt that Nur Jehan achieved something of a miracle in keeping her unstable husband sufficiently sober to hold his empire together. An alcoholic autocrat with the cruelty of Timur and the temperament of an artist would have been no easy man to handle even if they had both been young, but they were both middle-aged. He was often too drunk to eat by dinner-time, and had to have food put into his mouth by an attendant. The fact that he loved her madly may have made things casier, but even this is doubtful.

She saved numerous people condemned to crucifixion and other unpleasant deaths. She gave away enormous sums to poor widows. She placated the conservative Moslems, who much disliked Jehangir's hereditary pleasure in conversing with Jesuits. She made and unmade the chief officers of State. She administered justice. She shot tigers. Her capable hands held the sceptre, also the keys of Jehangir's cellar, at least metaphorically.

One night there was a dispute over the amount of brandy he had drunk, and he slapped her face. She went to her room and said that she would not speak to him again until he had bowed down to her feet.

Next day, when Jehangir was sober, he wanted to apologise, but it would have been impossible for him to bow to a woman. He sulked, so did Nur Jehan. While walking in the palace gardens in Agra, where there was much ornamental water, Nur Jehan made a discovery. Her women had put rose-leaves in a pond, and these, heated by the sun, had given off an oily liquid with a delicious scent.

Above the pond a balcony projected. She arranged that the Emperor should stand there, above her, and bow to her reflection in the water. So honour was saved, and they made up their quarrel, and no doubt bottled the attar of roses, and went off to Kashmir together, where the fragrance of their memory survives in one of the loveliest gardens in the world.

During his reign of twenty-two years Jehangir encouraged much good building, at Agra and elsewhere, and established

a splendid school of miniature painting, while his son, conducted inconclusive wars in the Deccan and Afghanistans and waited for the day when the throne would become vacant. He was shrewd enough on his lucid mornings to manage the administration which Akbar had so carefully planned; but he cared nothing for public business: he was always thinking of how soon he could get away on a holiday with Nur Jehan.

Inevitably the prosperity of the empire deteriorated, and intrigues for the succession were rife. At last an Afghan general, Mahabat Khan, revolted in 1626, and seized the Emperor's person. With amazing audacity Nur Jehan (who was then fifty) escaped from the Imperial camp, rallied the Imperial bodyguard, and rescued him. But by now he had grown old and asthmatic. He went to Kashmir as usual in the summer of 1627, but fell ill there, and died on his way back to Lahore on October 28th.

Nur Jehan, although completely devoted to Jehangir, had made provision for the future by marrying her daughter by Sher Afkan to a younger son of Jehangir's, Shahriyar, who was handsome as good, but a fool. Shahriyar seized Lahore, but the dowager Empress had not reckoned with the ambitions of her brother, Asaf Khan, whose daughter Arjumand, Banu Begum was married to Shahjehan, Jehangir's ablest son.

Shahjehan was at the time the Viceroy of the Deccan. He hurried north with an army, while Asaf Khan put Shahriyar out of the way. There was another claimant for the throne at Agra, a son of the blinded Khusrú, who was actually declared Emperor for a short time. But Shahjehan had a good friend in Asaf Khan. The latter told the boy that Shahjehan had died on his way from the Deccan, and that he was being carried north to be buried with his forefathers. When Shahjehan's army reached the neighbourhood of Agra, Asaf Khan and the young Emperor went out to meet the supposed funeral cortège. A bier lay in a tent, where the chief men of the empire had assembled. Then the coverlet was drawn aside, and Shahjehan rose amidst the acclamation of the nobles.

It was a clever ruse, but one that we cannot imagine the earlier Moghuls adopting.

As to Nur Jehan, she was kindly treated, being given an allowance of £200,000 on the understanding that she withdrew from public life. This she did, taking no further part in politics, and occupying herself with prayer and charity for the nineteen years of life which remained to her. She sleeps beside her husband in the Shahdara gardens near Lahore.

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ALTHOUGH Shahjehan<sup>1</sup> was compelled, like his ancestors, to fight on various frontiers, the greater part of his life was spent in Delhi or Agra, in building and administration, while his sons and generals collected the taxes and punished rebellions. His masterpieces are the Taj Mahal and the Pearl Mosque in Agra, the fort and palace at Delhi, and the tomb of Jehangir at Lahore. His reign was magnificent, but the peasants must have suffered, paying with their sweat and empty stomachs for all the white splendour of the Moghuls. There was a famine in the south. "Life was offered for a loaf," says the historian Abul Hamid, "but none would buy. For a long time dog's flesh was sold for goat's flesh, and the pounded bones of the dead were mixed with flour and sold." Even allowing for exaggeration, it is not a pleasant picture, and it is one which is painted by other travellers who saw pestilence and hunger and unburied corpses all the way from Agra to the west coast. Bernier says that "no adequate description can be conveyed of the sufferings of the people . . . there is no city or town which, if it be not already ruined or deserted, does not bear the evident marks of approaching decay."

In Delhi, however, the Emperor sat on the most magnificent throne in the world, begun in the time of Timur, and added to year by year, until now its gold and jewels were worth, according to Tavernier, who was a professional

<sup>1</sup> Shahjehan, born December 27th, 1591, deposed June 1658, died February 1st, 1666, was acclaimed as Emperor in January 1628. His nephew managed to escape to Persia.

jeweller and a good observer, some £12,000,000. It was six feet long and four wide. Its massive legs were of gold, inlaid with diamonds, rubies, and emeralds ("all showy stones but very flat"), while its canopy was "covered with diamonds and pearls, and above it there is a peacock with elevated tail made of blue sapphires, the body of gold inlaid with precious stones, having a large ruby in front of the breast, from whence hangs a pear-shaped pearl of fifty carats or thereabouts, and of a somewhat yellow water.

"On the side of the throne opposite the court there is a jewel consisting of a diamond of from eighty to ninety carats in weight, with rubies and emeralds round it, and when the Emperor is seated he has this jewel in full view. But in my opinion the most costly point about this magnificent throne is that the twelve columns supporting the canopy are surrounded with beautiful rows of pearls, which are round, and of fine water, and weigh from six to ten carats each."

When he gave public audience, the monarch himself was as gorgeous as his throne, being ablaze with jewels from his diamond aigrette to his emerald-encrusted slippers. To the courtiers and courtesans who made their obeisances to him, the India of the great plains must have seemed very far away. Here cool fountains played behind exquisite marble screens, and blood and wine were spilled recklessly; there millions were toiling to get a living out of the parched earth. Many suffered for the beauty that Shahjehan made 'on earth, including himself, but they ache no longer in their bones; and to moralise is profitless.

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THREE years after his accession, Shahjehan's dearly loved wife, Arjumand, died in giving birth to her fourteenth child at Burhanpur, while they were on an expedition to suppress disorder in the Deccan. Her body was brought to Agra and laid in the garden by the Jumna where the Taj now stands. For a week the Emperor transacted no business, and for two years the Court mourned the "Crown of the Palace."

Her tomb was begun in 1632, and took eighteen years in building, the magnificent gateway to the garden being finished two years earlier, in 1648. Twenty thousand men were employed, and the cost ran into many million pounds.

Praise of the Taj Mahal sounds falsely in the ears of those who have seen its beauty in many lights and moods. Each time they return to it, deepened perhaps by sorrow and experience, they will find new meaning in this embodiment of all that man has ever felt for the woman he loved: her grace is here incarnate, and her mystery also. It is a miracle which lives beside the banks of the Jumna, made new for each beholder; and such emotions do not come within the scope of this book. The facts of its building are best given in Mr. E. B. Havell's words:<sup>1</sup> "It was one of those intervals in history when the whole genius of people is concentrated on great architectural works, and art becomes the epitome of the age. For the Taj was not the creation of a single master-mind, but the consummation of a great art epoch. Since the time of Akbar the best architects, artists and craftsmen of India, Persia, Arabia and Central Asia had been attracted to the Moghul Court. All the resources of a great empire were at their disposal, for Shahjehan desired that this monument of his grief should be one of the wonders of the world. The sad circumstances which attended the early death of the devoted wife who had endeared herself to the people might well inspire all his subjects to join in the Emperor's pious intentions."

Extraordinary it is to have to record that an English Viceroy—one moreover with deep desire to serve India well—thought of breaking up the Taj Mahal and selling it by auction, and was only dissuaded from doing so when he discovered that its marble would fetch a very small sum. Those days have passed, and are as remote as the times—also recent—when men were hung for sheep-stealing. In this century, and especially since the days of Lord Curzon, who gave the Taj the beautiful lamp that hangs in the central shrine, the masterpieces of Indian architecture have been

<sup>1</sup> *Agra and the Taj*, by E. B. Havell (Longmans, Green, 1904).



cared for as well as the Moghuls in their prime would have tended them.

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SHAHJEHAN had four sons whom he kept busy fighting, and two daughters whom he kept at home and loved so dearly that the tongues of scandal wagged maliciously. The favourite was Jehanara, for whom Shahjehan built the great mosque in Delhi, and it was indirectly through her that the British obtained a footing in Calcutta.

Jehanara had a slave-girl whose dress caught fire: in trying to put it out she burned herself in the face and hands. Her life was in danger, and Shahjehan sent for an English doctor, Gabriel Boughton, who was attached to the factory at Surat, near Bombay. Boughton insisted on seeing his patient before treating her, which was contrary to Court etiquette, and surprised the Moghul doctors a great deal, but his methods were successful, and Jehanara was cured. Thereupon Shahjehan offered him any reward he liked to name. Boughton wanted nothing for himself, but asked for a grant of land at Balasore, 140 miles down river from Calcutta, and this was immediately granted, orders to issue the *firman* being sent to the Emperor's second son, who was Governor of Bengal at this time.

The sons of Shahjehan were Dara Shikoh, his favourite, whose only vice in the eyes of the masses was that he kept a crucifix in his bedroom; Shuja, the Governor of Bengal, who was a drunkard; Aurungzeb, whose family nickname, the "White Snake," was probably not entirely due to his fair complexion, for he was a thorough-paced intriguer; and Murad, an amiable nincompoop who was also a drunkard.

Dara Shikoh was kept at home, although nominally Governor of the North. Shuja revelled in Bengal, Aurungzeb and Murad served in various wars, and gained experience which was to stand Aurungzeb, at any rate, in good stead when at last the day arrived, in March 1657, that the old Emperor fell ill. Shahjehan (according to harem gossip) had contracted a complaint not mentioned in polite society, and had attempted to cure himself with such drastic drugging

that his kidneys no longer functioned. The symptoms were really alarming, but soon passed.

Meanwhile Shuja had marched on Delhi from the east, and Dara Shikoh went out to meet him. Murad gathered an army also, and hurried northwards from the Deccan. Aurungzeb bided his time. After Shuja and Dara Shikoh had fought a pitched battle near Benares, he declared for Murad. "I have not the slightest wish to take part in the government of this unstable, deceitful world," he wrote, "but it is necessary to see that our dear father is not troubled by these pretenders. Let us attack them together, and then if the Emperor passes away from this transitory scene—may Allah preserve him!—you shall be his successor."

Murad was overjoyed, and their armies marched together and won a victory after some stern hand-to-hand fighting, in which Murad was wounded. But what were wounds when his brother was at his side, only waiting for the auspicious moment to gird him with the Sword of Humayun? Murad had forgotten the proverb that "twelve beggars can sleep under one blanket, but not two kings in one kingdom."

Aurungzeb gave a banquet for his brother to celebrate their victory. A great many toasts were proposed and Aurungzeb drank them all in water. Not so Murad. He was soon lying on a couch in his tent, dead drunk, with a eunuch massaging his feet. Presently the revellers went away. Aurungzeb made a sign to the eunuch, who came out. He was seized and silently strangled.

Murad was now alone, but Aurungzeb saw that he was armed with a sword and dagger. He did not want any bloodshed if it could be avoided. So he sent his four-year-old son into the tent, saying: "If you can bring out your uncle's sword without waking him, see what a fine jewel I'll give you!" The child was delighted with the game, and secured the sword.

"Now fetch me his dagger, and you shall have this other jewel, too," said Aurungzeb.

Again the child went in, and stole the dagger.

Presently Murad woke to find men shaking him. A surprising way to treat an Emperor, he thought. Aurungzeb,

however, was still bland and humble. He said that he felt that it would be unwise to make Murad the Emperor just yet, since he had violated the laws of the Prophet with regard to alcohol. For the present, therefore, while their dear father was alive, he himself would deal with affairs at Delhi. Murad was a fool, but not such a fool as not to know that his days were numbered.

So the White Snake went alone to Delhi, and Murad to the fortress at Gwalior. Shuja was hunted down and perished obscurely. Dara Shikoh was captured and accused of being a Christian. Perhaps he was, for almost his last words are said to have been, "The Son of Mary is my salvation." He fought against his assailants with a kitchen knife, and fell, overpowered.

When the White Snake arrived before Delhi, Shahjehan sent word that he was to return at once to the Deccan. Aurungzeb replied that the message must be false. His father would never give such orders. Unless his eldest son was allowed to enter the palace he would have to assume that the Emperor was dead, and that someone was trying to deceive him. Shahjehan suggested that Aurungzeb might come to the palace himself, but the invitation was refused with the utmost politeness.

Eventually Aurungzeb's son was allowed to enter, of course with a suitable escort. Shahjehan's guards were overpowered without any trouble, whereupon Aurungzeb immediately proclaimed himself Emperor, in the Shalimar garden outside the city.

Shahjehan was then sixty-seven, and doubtless weary of his responsibilities. He seems to have settled down to his captivity without much complaint. Aurungzeb treated him with the greatest consideration, as he did Jehanara. It was only when he demanded the Crown jewels that Shahjehan lost his temper. What did this wretched White Snake know of his priceless rubies and marvellous emeralds? Jehanara had much difficulty in dissuading her father from pounding them all up in a mortar.

One night a parcel arrived for the old Emperor, a present from Aurungzeb. Shahjehan loved presents, and opened

this one with trembling expectancy, for he hoped for some gift that might be the beginning of a reconciliation. There were many wrappings, and perhaps before he saw the blood on them he had guessed what he would find. Out rolled the head of Dara Shikoh, his dearest-loved son.

Towards the end of his life Shahjehan sat for long hours at a balcony of the Agra Fort, looking out over the Jumna to the domes and minarets of the Taj Mahal. Jehanara was with him to the end: Jehanara whom he adored because she reminded him so much of her mother.

He sleeps now by the side of Arjumand until the day of Resurrection. Eighteen mullahs are attached to the shrine, and one of them is always present, ready to chant the glorious names of Allah, which ring and resound under the great dome, in praise of Him who sent the spark from heaven that made this glory out of stone and marble.

Jehanara's plain small tomb may still be seen in Delhi, in the garden of the Chisti Sheikh who said that it was a far cry to Delhi: it has no adornment save the epitaph she wrote for herself: "Let nothing but green conceal my grave. Grass is the best covering for the humble. The poor, transitory Jehanara, disciple of the holy men of Christ, and daughter of the Emperor Shahjehan."

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AURUNGZEB was a devout Moslem, hard-working, abstemious, and a fair general; but the days of the Moghuls were numbered. His ancestors and their nobles were "ruddy men in boots," as Sir W. W. Hunter says, but his own chieftains and ministers "were pale persons in petticoats, who went to war in palanquins." The stock had deteriorated, and the best of the Rajputs still held aloof from government. Fresh blood was wanted. It came, but not to help the Moghuls.

Aurangzeb's empire was threatened from three directions. Europe had long ago discovered India, but now (as shall be told in the next chapter) her merchants were firmly established at a dozen points on the peninsula, and determined to extend their trade. Then in the west, in 1627, the year

Jehangir died, a boy was born at Poona who was destined to break the heart of the empire and found a new dynasty: the Mahratta, Sivaji. And in the north, before Baber's time, a weaver of Lahore had founded a new religion, which was to endure longer than the Empire of the Moghuls. Its disciples were called Sikhs, or "learners." Already the Sikhs were becoming dangerous.

Nanak Chand, the weaver aforesaid, was born in 1469, and wandered over Asia as far as Mecca. He returned to Lahore, and preached the Unity of God and the abolition of caste. He rejected the supremacy of the Brahmin, prohibited idolatry and pilgrimages, and died, quite unknown to the world at large, in 1539, thirteen years after Baber had gained the Empire of India. Nanak was the first Guru, or teacher of the Sikhs, and after him (unlike other religions) came nine other founders or prophets: Angad, Umardas, Ramdas, who built the Temple at Amritsar, Arjun, whose writings Akbar read, finding them "worthy of reverence," Hargovind, Haridas, Harkishen, Tegh Bahadur, who was martyred by Aurungzeb in Delhi in 1675, and finally Guru Govind.

The circumstances of Tegh Bahadur's death are obscure, but it is certain that the Moslem governors of the Punjab were getting anxious about this sect of Hindus—usually such gentle, industrious people, paying their taxes without complaint—who had become a brotherhood of warriors, and a resourceful, self-governing community. Tegh Bahadur was beheaded and quartered, pieces of his body being exhibited in various parts of the Imperial capital.

No doubt Aurungzeb thought no more about this troublesome fanatic than Pilate did of Christ. The remains of the Guru were gathered up by humble Sikhs in Delhi and taken back to Amritsar, where his son Govind, the tenth and greatest Guru, cremated them.

Under Govind (1675-1708) the Sikhs became a militant nation, governed by the elders of the Khalsa, or mystical body of the elect. There were to be no more Gurus. "Where five of the Khalsa meet, my spirit shall be with them." At their initiation Sikhs promise to worship one God, to

abjure the company of those who kill their daughters, to bathe frequently, never to cut their hair, always to wear a weapon, to honour their Gurus, and to be faithful unto death. After initiation they put Singh (lion) after their name.

To oust the Moslems from the Punjab was the ambition of Guru Govind Singh, though he knew that it would not be accomplished in his lifetime. Before the death of Aurungzeb, however, the Khalsa had been steeled and united by many martyrdoms, and they were to suffer further trials, which only increased their resolution.

A later Moghul inflicted some particularly atrocious punishments—even for that time—on the person and followers of a Sikh leader named Banda, whom he captured in 1716. Banda's followers were executed before his eyes at the rate of a dozen a day, until there were none left except his son. Then all his personal effects were destroyed, including his cat. Then his son was killed, and his heart cut out and thrown in his face. Finally he was torn to pieces with red-hot pincers. Sikhs have not forgotten such things. They were lions in war, and still are.

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THE Marathas, however, were more of an immediate thorn in the Moghul flesh than the Sikhs. Sivaji, the son of a general in the service of the Moghul kingdoms of the Deccan, began his career as a robber chief in 1643, hunting men as others do deer, or being himself hunted and enjoying his escapes.

In 1659 (while Aurungzeb was away in Delhi establishing his shadowy dominion over India) Sivaji proposed an armistice to the Moslem Commander-in-Chief of the Bijapur troops, who was trying to surround his forces. When Afzul Khan came to meet him, Sivaji embraced him with both arms, but on his hands were fastened the terrible hooks, like tiger claws, which are known as *vignakh*. Sivaji's friendship with the foreigner was always a clasp of death, but the "mountain rat," as Aurungzeb called him, was a great leader, and has a right to his title as national hero of the

Marathas, for he extended his dominion far and wide, and ruled justly and wisely.

In 1671 he was exacting tribute of one-fourth of the revenue due to the Moghul Government from the province of Khandesh in Western India, and enthroned himself at Rajgarh as "Lord of the Royal Umbrella." In 1680 Aurungzeb came south in person to deal with him, but failed after twenty years of marching and counter-marching. The guerrilla war of the Marathas was conducted on an immense scale. They slept on the ground, with their reins knotted to their wrists, while the Moghul army was like an enormous moving city—a Hollywood parody of the tents of Tamerlane—with its huge marquees, and pompous bands, and the immense beacon light which guided the camp-followers (who exceeded the number of soldiers) home from their foraging expeditions. During these twenty years the Marathas changed from a race of hardy peasants into a successful warrior people who despised the Moghuls.

They saw, clearly enough, as did the Europeans of that time, that whoever was to rule India it would not be the House of Timur, and made their plans accordingly.

Aurangzeb was old and tired, though he was able to read his correspondence without spectacles when well over the age of eighty. All Hindu India was in revolt: not the Marathas only, but the Rajputs and the fierce Jats of the Punjab. Taxes remained unpaid, the Exchequer was empty, and the Moghul soldiers were generally on the verge of mutiny: their campaigning consisted of endless, futile pursuits, and laborious, harassing retreats, with never a victory to cheer them or a prosperous city to loot.

"My time has been passed vainly," wrote the weary Emperor to a relative shortly before he died, at Ahmadnagar, on February 21st, 1707. It was true. Within five years of his death the Moghul Empire was in ruins.

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THESE six Great Moghuls (1526-1761) were the most talented and successful dynasty that India—perhaps the world—has ever seen. Baber and Jehangir stand out clearly

in their own writings, and Shahjehan by the glories of the Taj Mahal and the Pearl Mosque, but all of them—Baber, Humayun, Akbar, Jehangir, Shahjehan and Aurungzeb—were remarkable men. Yet from the distance of three centuries we can see how marked was the decline in character from the gay and gallant Baber to the cold and crafty Aurungzeb. In Humayun, Baber's son, there was chivalry and tenacity, but his occasional fits of energy alternate with long spells of indecision, due to his addiction to opium and bhang.<sup>1</sup> Akbar bubbled over with vitality in his youth and prime, no doubt because of his childhood in the Sind desert and in the mountains of Afghanistan (and because his mother was of desert Arab blood—a Sheikh's daughter of the lineage of the Prophet), but the climate of India sapped his vigour by the time he was fifty, when he began to take opium (in moderate doses) and became subject to violent fits of temper. Three of his sons died of the Timurid failing for strong drink, and Jehangir, his successor, drank a gallon of wine a day, when he could get it, as well as taking opium. Shahjehan was more abstemious, as becomes a great artist; nevertheless, his Court was vicious, and his own private life not beyond reproach after the death of "the lady of the Taj." Although the Moghul Empire was at the summit of its magnificence in his day (1628-1658), it is clear that its virility was waning, and blood of the descendants of Timur running thin. Yet their heredity was sound enough: there was no inbreeding, and the infusion of foreign blood came from the best stocks. Jehangir's mother was a Rajput princess, and so was Shahjehan's, so that the builder of the Taj was three-quarters Hindu. His son Aurungzeb was Moslem-born, by Arjumand Banu Begum. In him the old capacity for hard work returns, but without a spark of the genius of his forbears: he had none of their quick intuition, flexibility and dash.

How is it that other peoples in other lands have been able to establish enduring nations, but that in India, in spite of the abilities of these six Moghuls, extending over 235 years, to say nothing of the efforts of great men of the remoter past, there has always been a tendency to disruption, an anarchy

<sup>1</sup> Bhang is a decoction of *Cannabis indica*, a root growing in Afghanistan.



latent in even the best administration? Is it due to the conflict of religions? Or must we suppose that there is some fatal influence in the climate that enervates the conquerors, leaving them open to another tide of invasion? If we accept the latter theory, we shall find it difficult to explain the rise of the Mahrattas and the Sikhs. There was nothing devitalised (although there was much to deplore) about such characters as Sivaji and Ranjit Singh.

My own conclusion, which I develop in the last chapter, is that India cannot be one country, like the United States, but must remain, like Europe, an area of diversified cultures, and that all attempts to force her into one mould will meet with disaster in the future, as they have in the past.

The nations of India, however, have large horizons of happiness and progress before them, provided they do not try to exterminate each other.

## CHAPTER V

### EUROPE ENTERS INDIA

"**B**EWARE of scattering your goods in divers parts of the country," wrote the wise Sir Thomas Roe to the directors of the East India Company in 1618, "and engaging your stock and servants far into the country, for the time will come when all these kingdoms will be in combustion, and a few years' war will not decide the inveterate malice laid up against a day of vengeance."

Roe knew India well, for he spent three years at the Court of Jehangir, to whom he was accredited as Ambassador by James I. He was not, of course, the first European to enter India, or even to visit the Moghul Court. The Portuguese were the first on the scene. Christopher Columbus was trying to discover India when he sailed from Lisbon (he had with him a letter of introduction to the Khan of Tartary), and thought he had done so to the end of his life. Vasco da Gama was more successful in his aim, reaching the coast of Malabar in 1498. He was followed by Cabral, Albuquerque, and other Portuguese knights-errant, whose aim was not chiefly trade, but the conquest and conversion to Christianity of all India. They established themselves in the south, at Calicut, and in the west at Goa, but the task they had set themselves was beyond human strength.

The Dutch formed the United East India Company of the Netherlands in 1602, and set up a factory at Surat in 1616. They eventually ousted the Portuguese from most of their establishments, and became the dominant European power in India until Clive defeated them at Chinsura (near Calcutta) in 1759. From then onwards their possessions were wrested from them one by one until, by 1811, they had none left on the Indian mainland.

The French founded a *Compagnie des Indes* in 1664 and built factories at Surat in 1668, and at Pondicherry and

Chandernagore in 1674. Although late-comers, they were the first to see the advantages of combining politics with trade; and when, after the death of Aurungzeb, it was evident that India was falling into anarchy, Dupleix, the famous Governor of Pondicherry, conceived the far from impossible project of uniting all India under French rule. He was a man of high ambition and great capacity, and might have succeeded had not war broken out between England and France in 1744.

English adventurers in the India trade were nearly a century behind the Portuguese, but before the Dutch and French. In 1583 four adventurous lads, Ralph Fitch, John Newberry, William Leedes, and James Story, made the overland journey to India. Fitch was the only one to return. Newberry died on the way home. Leedes settled down in India and disappears from history. Story became a shopkeeper in Goa. Perhaps Fitch was the man who gave Akbar a black velvet European suit, which the Emperor liked to wear in private. He returned to London after his visit to the Great Moghul and founded what was afterwards to become the East India Company.

At first—from 1601 to 1612—the Company traded by means of Separate Voyages—that is, a group of merchants financed an expedition whose profits were divided between them, as ships are now underwritten at Lloyds. In 1608 Captain William Hawkins, of the Third Separate Voyage, landed at Swally Roads, on the west coast of India, near Surat, and was told by the Portuguese—to his fury, for, after all, the Invincible Armada had been defeated twenty years before—that the seas belonged to Spain. After giving “the Portugals” the rough edge of his tongue (he was a nephew to Sir John Hawkins, who started the trade in African slaves), he made his way to Agra, which he reached in April 1609.

Jehangir sent for the Englishman, and took a liking to him immediately. Hawkins asked for a concession for his company in Surat. Jehangir agreed, but on one condition, that Hawkins should stay at Court. He consented (writing home, “So I shall do you good service and feather my nest”), and married an Armenian wife. To the sea rover, Jehangir

was a man who took his liquor like a lord, and to the Emperor, Hawkins must have been a real friend by comparison to the salaaming courtiers with whom he was surrounded, especially as he spoke Turki, which was a man's language. The two did not contrive to do much business, however. Eventually Hawkins left for home (with his Armenian wife), disgusted by the difficulties of getting anything practical done. He died on the way to England.

Sir Thomas Roe was a far cleverer man than Hawkins, but he achieved little more. Drinking with the Great Moghul was not at all to his taste. Once Roe was given "mingled wine, half of the grape, half artificial," and asked to toast the Emperor. "I drank a little," he tells us, "but it was more strong than ever I tasted, so that it made me sneeze, whereat he laughed and called for raisins, almonds, and sliced lemons, which were brought to me on a plate of gold, and he bade me eat and drink what I would, and no more."

At this party Jehangir gave the gold cup from which he drank to Roe (the only present the British Ambassador ever accepted: it was about two pounds in weight, and encrusted with 2,110 rubies, turquoises, and emeralds, but "the value I cannot judge, because many of the stones are foul"), and Asaf Khan (the Queen's brother) "would have caused me to kneel, and knock my head against the ground, but His Majesty best accepted what I did."

The great wealth of the Emperor was noted by Roe, yet he says: "I never imagined a Prince so famed would live so meanly. This is the dullest, basest place I ever saw. These people are more than half Brahmins, whose religion it is not to kill a louse biting them, and the Moghuls are an effeminate people. Religions infinite, laws none. In this confusion, what can be expected?"<sup>1</sup>

Roe hoped for a treaty enabling British trade to be carried on at Surat and elsewhere without vexatious restrictions. He was not entirely successful, but his three years' residence at Court enabled the Surat factory to establish itself, and gave the Moghuls a better understanding—for what it was

<sup>1</sup> *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to India*, edited by Sir William Foster (Oxford University Press, 1926).

worth—of the English mind. Both Jehangir and Shahjehan came to like Sir Thomas in the end, in spite of his stiff manners and plain speaking about trade, and his horror when the Emperor (surely as a joke!) sent him a concubine from his own harem.

The principal figures of the Moghul Court stand out clearly in Roe's diary, and there is a remarkable sketch of the enigmatic and rather sinister Shahjehan, fretting, no doubt, at the details to which he must attend, when his dreams were all of art. "I never saw so settled a countenance," writes Roe, "nor any man keep so constant a gravity, never smiling, nor in face showing any respect of men, but mingled with extreme pride and contempt of all. Yet I found some inward trouble now and then assail him, and a kind of brokenness and distraction in his thoughts."

"The best way to do your business in this Court," he says in a letter to the East India Company, "is to find some Moghul that you may entertain for 1,000 rupees by the year as your solicitor. A meaner agent amongst these proud Moors would better effect your business. My quality for ceremonies either begets you enemies or suffers unworthily. I have moderated according to my discretion, but with a swollen heart." He was very glad to sail for home in February 1619; and in September he had an audience of King James at Hampton Court, presenting him with "two antelopes, a strange and beautiful kind of red deer, and a rich tent, rare carpets, certain umbrellas, and such-like trinkets from the Great Moghul."

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THAT year (1619) a Treaty of Defence was signed between the British and Dutch Companies trading in India, whose rivalries—now that the Portuguese were out of the way—were threatening them with mutual ruin. Both fleets, "dressed out in all their flags, and with yards manned, saluted each other, but the treaty ended in the smoke of that stately salutation,"<sup>1</sup> and the rivalry continued. Soon the East India Company fell on evil days, and it was prac-

<sup>1</sup> *Imperial Gazetteer of India* (Clarendon Press, 1908).

tically bankrupt at the time of the Civil War in England. Not until 1657 were matters put right by Cromwell, who granted it a charter whereby a Joint Stock Company was formed with a capital of £739,782.

Under Charles II the Company enjoyed rapidly increasing prosperity (much of it due to Boughton having cured Jehanara of her burns in 1651), so that the value of its stock had risen by 350 per cent. before the King's death. Bombay was ceded to the British Crown as part of the dowry of the King's wife (Catherine of Braganza), and he transferred it to the East India Company for a token payment of £10 a year in 1668.

Sir Thomas Roe's prophècy had hung fire for half a century, but now the time was coming when "all these kingdoms will be in combustion." During the reign of Aurungzeb the Court of Committees of the East India Company decided (1686) to reverse its commercial policy: it was impossible to trade peacefully in the chaos then prevailing. The object of the Company must be to "establish such a policy of civil and military power as may be the foundation of a large, well-grounded, sure English dominion in India for all time to come." These were big words attended by small results, and the decision was soon reversed. Thereafter the Court of Directors in London was constantly begging its Governors in Calcutta not to extend their operations. British India was made by capitalist enterprise, but chiefly against the wishes of the capitalists, who detested expensive conquests.

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**A**FTER the death of Aurungzeb (1707) the whole of southern India became practically independent of the Moghuls. The next Emperor, Bahadur Shah, died in Lahore in 1712, having failed to recover the Deccan or to quell the Rajputs and Sikhs in the north. His son, after the usual disputes over the succession, held court in Delhi for a few months, but devoted the greater part of his time to a dancing-girl with whom he was crazily in love. He was defeated in battle by his nephew, Farrukhsiyar, who beheaded him

(1712) and reigned uneasily for seven years before being beheaded himself. Two negligible and nominal Emperors succeeded him, reigning only a few months, and were followed by Mahomed Shah, during whose reign (1719-1748) occurred the sack of Delhi under Nadir Shah, an ex-slave and ex-bandit, who had made himself King of Persia.

Nadir crossed the Indus in 1738, and defeated the "Great" Moghul at Panipat in February 1739. His army, like Tamerlane's, was under excellent discipline, and at first there was no looting, but when he heard that some of his soldiers had been murdered, the terrible Persian went to the mosque which still stands in the principal street of Delhi (the Mosque of Blood it is now called), and laying bare his sword gave orders that the army could loot and kill until he sheathed it again.

For nine hours the slaughter continued. Fifty thousand corpses lay heaped in the streets. Fantastic estimates have been made of the loot taken. Timur in 1398 and Baber in 1526 had left little, but now Delhi had not been sacked for two centuries, and was rich again. Nadir stripped Shah-jehan's palace of everything it possessed, including the Peacock Throne. Then he marched back to Persia, cynically investing Mahomed Shah with a rich imperial robe, and telling him he was lord of his empty palace and devastated lands.

For all practical purposes that was the end of the Moghul dynasty, though five more of the line held a squalid Court in Delhi, until the seventeenth Emperor, Bahadur Shah, was found by the British hiding in the tomb of his ancestor, Humayun, in 1857.

In Bengal, since the break-up of the Moghul Empire, the British had been able to trade peaceably enough with the Nawabs who governed that province. Madras was also safe, so long as the Moslems and Mahrattas were quarrelling. When war broke out with France the British lost Madras (1746), but it was restored to them in 1748 by the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle.

An Englishman who escaped from Madras, taking refuge in the only British settlement on the Coromandel coast, Fort

St. David, was that brilliant and unhappy genius, Robert Clive, then a young writer in the Company's service, on a salary of £5 a year. Clive was a natural soldier, but hated the routine of business. He had arrived in Madras in 1744, at the age of nineteen, and had written home that he had not "enjoyed one happy day since I left my native land." He tried to commit suicide, but the pistol twice misfired. Like Akbar, who also took appalling risks in his youth, his deliverance from peril convinced him that his life was spared for some great purpose. He fought a duel in Madras with an officer with whom he had quarrelled over the card-table. Clive missed. His adversary came up and held a pistol at his head, demanding an immediate apology. "Fire and be damned," said Clive. "I say you cheated, and say so still."

A youth of such determination was valuable in those dangerous days, and the Company soon gave him employment in harassing the French in the south. By all the rules of war Clive was a reckless leader. He marched his men into ambushes, and he allowed his camps to be surprised, yet contrived always to turn imminent disaster into sweeping victory. His defence of Arcot (seventy miles inland from Madras) was an amazing exploit: with only 120 British and 200 Indian soldiers he held a fort more than a mile in circumference for fifty days against 150 French and more than 5,000 Indian troops.

When still only twenty-eight years old he retired from India (1753) and was given a banquet by the Court of Directors in London, and a diamond-hilted sword. He stood for Parliament, but was not elected. England was too small and settled for his ambition: in 1755 he sailed again for India, having been appointed Governor of Fort St. David. He landed on June 20th, 1756, the very day of the tragedy of the Black Hole of Calcutta.

The Black Hole is an ugly story, beginning with the shocking behaviour of the Company's officers in Calcutta, who ran away from their posts when they heard that the Nawab of Bengal was about to attack the settlement with 40,000 men. It is true that the defenders were only 60 Europeans and 120 Sepoys, nevertheless a bold front might have saved



Calcutta: it certainly would have, had Clive been present. The chief culprits were both afterwards dismissed for cowardice.

Those left behind, however, fought gallantly. Losses were twenty-five men killed and fifty wounded before the force surrendered, being promised by Siraj-ud-daulah, the Nawab of Bengal, that no harm should come to them.

Nevertheless (it is thought without the Nawab's knowledge), all the Europeans in Calcutta were put into a room 22 feet by 14 feet, with only two small sky-lights. It was a hot June night, and there were 146 people in the room. There was practically no water. Next morning there were only twenty-three survivors, one of whom was a woman.

Clive and Admiral Watson were immediately ordered from Madras to Calcutta with all the troops they could collect. Next year (February 4th, 1792) Siraj-ud-daula's immense but unwieldy army was soundly beaten by Clive, who had only 2,000 men and fourteen guns, and made a treaty with the British, but no sooner had this been done than Clive attacked the French at Chandernagore, which was in the Nawab's possessions, and occupied that settlement. This enraged Siraj-ud-daulah, who wrote to the French commander in the Deccan, asking him to drive the British out of Calcutta. His letter fell into the hands of Clive.

Those were ruthless and reckless days, when men played for high stakes. It was neck or nothing: either the Nawab must be defeated, or the British would be driven into the sea. The servants of the Company

Now took a fleet, now sold a pound of tea,  
Weighed soap, stormed forts, held princes *in terrorem*,  
Drank, fought, smoked, lied, went home, and good papas  
Gave diamonds to their little boys for taws.

There was nothing small about Clive. His conduct in scheming for the overthrow of the Nawab was technically wrong, but the men he faced, with immense wealth and large armies at their disposal, were also thoroughly unscrupulous.

The first move was to alienate Siraj-ud-daula's Commander-in-Chief, Mir Jafar, with a promise that he would

be made Nawab if he would bring his troops over to the English side. But there were many others who had to be bribed, and Clive was as short of money as he was of men. A Calcutta millionaire, Omichund (Amin Chand), had wind of these plottings, and threatened to reveal them to Siraj-ud-daula unless he were promised 5 per cent. of the loot in the Nawab's capital at Murshidabad, which amounted to £6,000,000. Clive drew up a document, on red paper, agreeing to give Omichund the £300,000 he asked for, after victory, and prevailed on all the chief Englishmen in Calcutta to sign the document, except Admiral Watson, who would have nothing to do with it. So Clive, who never did things by halves, forged Watson's signature. To one of the chief agents of the intrigue he wrote: "Omichund is the greatest villain on earth. To counter-plot the scoundrel and at the same time give him no room to suspect our intentions, enclosed you will receive two forms of agreement, the one real, to be strictly kept by us, the other fictitious."

The real agreement was on white paper, the other on red. Having sent the Nawab an ultimatum, Clive marched out from Calcutta on June 15th, 1757, towards Murshidabad, 120 miles to the north. He had 8 guns, 900 English and 2,000 Indian troops; the Nawab 35,000 infantry, 15,000 cavalry, and 50 guns, but amongst his army were many traitors.

Yet the situation was desperate for Clive's little force, because if Mir Jafar "double-crossed" him, and joined the Nawab, as was quite possible, no one in Clive's force would be left alive. On the way north, Clive called a council-of-war on the evening of June 21st, to which he proposed the question: "Whether, in our present position, without assistance, and on our own bottom, it would be prudent to attack, or whether we should wait until joined by some native power?"

Clive, with the majority, decided that the offensive involved risks that they were not justified in running. After the meeting, he walked off by himself to the river bank, in a mood of black depression. After some hours' thought he came to a contrary resolution. He would attack, in spite of

having decided not to do so, taking on himself the responsibility for reversing the decision of his council. In the middle of the night he gave orders that the troops would cross the river at dawn.

After a wet, exhausting march, the men and their baggage arrived at the mango-grove of Plassey (thirty miles south of Murshidabad) on the evening of the 22nd. There was good cover behind the ditch and mud walls which guarded the fruit. All that night Clive lay awake on the roof of a hut, burdened with anxieties, no doubt, yet perhaps, like Cromwell on the eve of his battles, sustained by that elation which comes to great leaders before their hour of triumph.

When the sun rose at six o'clock on the morning of June 23rd, 1757, he saw the French with their guns on the left of the Nawab's line, and that line spreading in a semicircle, so that his troops were half-surrounded, as well as being outnumbered by fifteen to one. Behind him lay a deep river. It was victory or death.

The French opened fire, and were answered by Clive's lighter guns. Serried masses pressed forward from Siraj-ud-daula's infantry. Clive's men held to the ditch grimly. He could not advance in face of the enormous odds, but kept up a steady fire, not only on the Nawab's men, but occasionally on his very doubtful allies, Mir Jafir's cavalry, "in order to keep them at their distance." If he could hold throughout the day, he had no doubt that he could devise some stratagem during the hours of darkness to defeat the Nawab. But he did not have to wait. Heavy rain broke during the forenoon, and by midday the ammunition of the enemy guns was sodden, so that they could no longer fire. Clive had kept his powder dry.

The Nawab's best cavalry leader galloped at the British guns, expecting that the rain had put them out of action also, but grape-shot cut swathes through the horsemen, and killed the enemy leader. Then Siraj-ud-daula lost his nerve. He sent for the wavering Mir Jafar, threw his turban at his feet, and begged him to fight against the foreigners. Mir Jafar pretended to agree, but sent a messenger riding hell-for-leather to the mango-grove, telling Clive he had

won. By five o'clock all Siraj-ud-daula's forces were in retreat, except the French gunners: most of them were killed at their batteries. The losses on the British side were surprisingly small—much less than at Arcot—twenty-three all told.

Mir Jafar came in to see the British, wondering what reception he would get. The rattle of muskets as the troops presented arms alarmed him, but Clive greeted him as Viceroy of Bengal.

At the palace on the shores of the lake south of the Murshidabad, the leading men of the city came out to meet the conqueror. Before seeing them Clive wrote a curt note: "*Omichand, the red paper is a trick. You are to have nothing.*"

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MIR JAFAR had gained a kingdom by his manœuvres, but the terms under which he came to power were onerous. The East India Company claimed the right to 800 square miles round Calcutta, to be held at the usual rent, and in addition £1,250,000 as compensation for the Black Hole and for the expenses of the campaign. The Army and the Navy were each to receive £300,000. Clive received £250,000 for himself, and later, the right to the revenues of the lands south of Calcutta, which amounted to £30,000 a year. (This latter sum—known as Clive's *jagir*—was paid to him from 1765 until his death.) Other officials received large amounts. The total sum which Mir Jafar was required to pay was £2,340,000.

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NO general, not himself a ruler, has ever reaped such a rich reward for victory as did Clive, who left India for the second time in February 1760, at the age of thirty-five, a millionaire by modern standards, and with a great career apparently before him.

He was made a peer by George III, and returned to India as President and Governor of the East India Company in May, 1765. His principal task was the checking of widespread corruption in the Company's service. Hitherto

writers had received £5 a year, factors £15 a year, and even councillors only £40 to £100 a year, so that all the Company's servants were practically compelled—and of course very willing—to engage in private trade. The sale of salt was more or less a monopoly, and on the sale of betelnuts, tobacco and other luxuries they often levied illegal tolls which competed with the demands of the excise officials. To end these abuses and to determine a suitable salary for the officials concerned was a delicate and difficult matter, which Lord Clive tackled with his usual skill and energy. However, he could not be prevailed upon to stay in India more than eighteen months. He left the country for the last time at the beginning of 1767, returning home broken in health and prematurely aged, though he was only forty-two.

His administration was impeached in the House of Commons in 1773 (Parliament that year had to lend the Company £1,500,000, owing to its financial difficulties) and it was found that in his dealings with Siraj-ud-daula he had "abused the power with which he was entrusted," although he had also "rendered great and meritorious services to his country." It was a sad verdict to pass on the achievements of a genius who had altered the course of history,<sup>1</sup> yet it is difficult to dispute its fundamental justice. Clive was a great man, who rendered great service to his country, but the British Empire has been sustained and cemented not by men of genius but by men of undeviating integrity. For instance, the comparatively unknown Admiral Watson. The victor of Plassey died of an overdose of opium (it is generally thought taken deliberately) at his house in Berkeley Square in 1774.

<sup>1</sup> And might have altered it again. Suppose Clive had continued to govern in Bengal, the finances of the Company might never have fallen on evil days, and in that event it would not have been necessary to remove the export duty of 25 per cent. on 17 million pounds of tea lying in Calcutta, and place a tax upon the tea which was sent to Boston.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RULE OF JOHN COMPANY

**M**ARCHING as a volunteer with the men of Plassey might have been seen a twenty-six-year-old civilian of the Company, Warren Hastings. He returned home in 1764, after fourteen years in the trying climate of Bengal, but went out again in 1769 as Member of Council in Madras, and was appointed Governor of Fort William in 1772 at a salary of £25,000 a year.

Clive made possible the British Empire in India, but Warren Hastings laid the foundations of its power. His administration has been the subject of endless controversy, and a State trial at which he was denigrated by the most famous orators of an age of eloquence. His judges eventually acquitted him on all counts, as does later historical research.

Perhaps the best summing up of his case is in his own letter to Sir George Colebrooke, in which he explained that he had to raise money to defend the territories won by Clive, provide an income for the Company's shareholders, and fight for the Company's very survival not only against the intrigues of powerful foes on his borders, but also a faction in his own Council. (The Court of Directors had most unwisely sent out to Calcutta three men who knew little or nothing of India; Sir Philip Francis, General Clavering, and Colonel Monson.) "In such circumstances," he wrote, "it is impossible to avoid errors; and there are cases in which it may be necessary to adopt expedients which are not to be justified on such principles as the public can be judges of."

A terrible famine in 1770 had reduced the population of Bengal by one-third. In the north, the Mahrattas were the real rulers at Delhi, with the Moghul Emperor as their puppet. Roving bands called Pindaris—freebooters of all

faiths from the wreck of earlier kingdoms—spread ruin and terror over Southern and Central India. There was anarchy everywhere except where the British had established their power.

The impeachment of Hastings was due to his dealings with Chet Singh, the Raja of Benares, on whom he imposed the enormous fine of £625,000, and to his treatment of the wife and mother of the Nawab Wazir of Oudh, whom he compelled to disgorge £1,000,000 in cash and jewels which were the property of the late Nawab.

Hastings also had his troubles in Calcutta, where Sir Philip Francis, at the instigation of an ambitious Brahmin, Nanda Kumar ("Nuncomar" of the impeachment), accused him of taking two bribes of £100,000 and £40,000. But Nanda Kumar was himself a forger. He was tried in Calcutta, by an English jury, for forging a bond for a large sum, found guilty, and hanged on August 5th, 1775.

"After the death of Nuncomar," sneered Sir Philip Francis, "the Governor is well assured that no man who regards his safety will venture to stand forth as his accuser."

Five years later Hastings and Francis fought a duel. The latter was wounded, and continued his intrigues in London, where he found willing ears to listen, for the Company was beginning to think Hastings' policies too expensive.

In 1782 Lord Cornwallis was asked if he would go to India as Governor-General. "Certainly not," he replied. "Why should I run the risk of being disgraced to all eternity to fight Nabob princes, my own Council, and the Government at home?"

Hastings carried on, but four years later Cornwallis was induced to change his mind. His government (1786-93) and that of Sir John Shore (1793-98) were both comparatively uneventful. They were followed by the famous Marquess of Wellesley (1798-1805), brother to the still more famous Colonel Arthur Wellesley, who became the Duke of Wellington.

The new Governor-General was a firm friend of Pitt, and, unlike Clive and Hastings, could write to London: "No insult which can issue from the most loathsome den of the

India Office will accelerate my departure when the public safety shall appear to require my aid."<sup>1</sup>

He built himself the best Government House in India at Calcutta, and from there he planned with his eyes on world affairs. Napoleon was in Egypt. India was full of French officers in the pay of the Rajas, and Wellesley determined not only to make the British masters of the land, but to crush for ever French ambitions in Asia. In 1799 he demanded from the Nizam of Hyderabad that he should disband his French battalions, and that he should take no foreigners into his service without the consent of the British.

Then he turned to the Sultan of Mysore, the famous Tipu Sultan, who had had himself enrolled in a French Republican Society as "Citizen Tipu," and was now hoping for aid against the British from Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Maratha Rajas. At Seringapatam, on May 4th, 1799, Tipu's fort was stormed.<sup>2</sup> Tipu fought to the last, a couple of loaders handing him fresh muskets. His sons were well looked after by Lord Wellesley, and given a large allowance: the last, Prince Ghulam Mahomed, was a well-known figure in Calcutta until 1878.

The Nawab Wazir of Oudh was summarily dealt with: he was not paying enough tribute, and his beggarly £760,000 a year was always in arrears. The Nawab said that he was sick of governing under present conditions, and would like to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca, but the Governor-General replied that in that event the Company would take over all his possessions. So in 1801 he was forced to agree to the Treaty of Lucknow, whereby he handed over to the Company, in lieu of tribute, all the fertile lands between the Ganges and Jumna, and other rich districts.

Then came the turn of the Marathas. Their chief, Baji Rao, known as the Peshwa, had been driven from his

<sup>1</sup> *British India*, by R. W. Frazer (Fisher Unwin, 1908).

<sup>2</sup> First in the breach was General David Baird, who in a previous campaign in Mysore had been captured and kept four years chained to a fellow prisoner in Tipu's dungeons. He was notoriously irascible, and it was of him that his mother made the famous remark that she was "sorry for the man who is chained to our Davie."



capital of Poona by Holkar of Indore, himself a Maratha chieftain. This was Wellesley's opportunity. He agreed to support the Peshwa, provided he dismissed all his French officers, and paid the Company a subsidy of £325,000 a year for the necessary troops. On September 23rd, 1803, General Arthur Wellesley, with 4,500 men, won the great battle of Assaye<sup>1</sup> over the Maratha forces, numbering 20,000 cavalry, 16,000 infantry, and 100 guns. The Marathas lost 12,000 men and all their guns, and the British 1,600 men.

The finances of the Company were now in such a parlous state that a period of peace was imperative: its debts had risen £14,500,000 in ten years, and its annual deficit was over £2,000,000. So Wellesley was recalled in 1805, but the Directors erected a statue to him "as a permanent mark of their admiration"—doubtless also of their relief.

Under the administration of Lord Minto (1807-1813) the Company was able to convert its debt of £27,000,000 from a 12 per cent. loan to one at 6 per cent., saving nearly £600,000 a year in interest.

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AS this record shows, it is certainly not true that the British did not seek territorial aggrandisement in India. Nevertheless, there was always the restraining hand of the merchants. Moreover, in India itself there was amongst the British a growing admiration and respect for the art and philosophy of India, and a desire that Indians should share in the regeneration of their country.

It was Warren Hastings who, desiring that Indians should be ruled by their own law, commissioned certain pundits to prepare the *Code of Gentoo Law*, first published in London in 1776.<sup>2</sup> The Asiatic Society of Bengal was founded by Sir William Jones, Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, in 1784, and in 1785 Sir Charles Wilkins, the first European who really understood Sanskrit, published his translation of the Bhagavad Gita. The famous Hitopa-

<sup>1</sup> Assaye is 225 miles east-north-east of Bombay, and can be best visited from Jalan, on the Hyderabad State Railway.

<sup>2</sup> *India's Past*, by Dr. A. A. Macdonell (Clarendon Press, 1904).



desa fables followed in 1787. H. T. Colebrooke, "the founder of Indian philology and archæology," continued Jones's work, and in 1805 was the first to give an accurate account of the Vedas, scriptures which the Brahmins had hitherto kept carefully hidden from the eyes of foreigners. Thus it was that "at the beginning of the eighteenth century the only Europeans who had any real knowledge of Sanskrit were a few Englishmen."

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**L**ORD MINTO'S successor was the Marquess of Hastings (1814-1823), who conducted a campaign against the Gurkhas of Nepal, who have ever since been the friends or allies of the British. He also finally scotched the Maratha menace. The Peshwa surrendered and was removed from Poona to Bithur, near Cawnpore, where he lived very comfortably on a pension of £80,000 a year. His adopted son, the Nana Sahib, we shall meet again at Cawnpore.

Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835), the Governor-General who thought of selling the Taj by auction, was nevertheless the author of many notable reforms, such as the abolition of suttee and the suppression of thugs. Macaulay says of him that "his constant study was to elevate the intellectual and moral character of the nations committed to his charge."

Suttee, as we have seen, was prevalent in India from the earliest times. It had been prohibited by Akbar, and Jehangir used personally to send for widows who contemplated the sacrifice and attempt to dissuade them; nevertheless, no mere argument had the slightest effect. In 1817, and in Bengal alone, 700 widows burned themselves. Shocking as this seems, and was, those who accuse Bengalis of physical cowardice should think again. Lord William Bentinck's Regulation of 1829 was a stringent law making those who helped in a suttee accomplices to murder. It met with much opposition, and a committee of high-caste Hindus sent a British agent to London to argue their case before the Privy Council, claiming that the prohibition interfered with their religion.

But Hinduism, as many of its followers were ready to

admit—notably the great Brahmin reformer Raja Ram Mohun Roy—needed bringing up to date. Even thuggery sought its sanction. The thugs worshipped Bhavani, the goddess of destruction, and were professional stranglers who whipped a scarf round the necks of their victims and buried the body with a specially sanctified pick-axe. These horrible brotherhoods infested every road in India, often themselves travelling in the guise of merchants, so that no man could ever trust his neighbour. In the years between 1826 and 1835 more than 1,500 thugs were captured and hung, or transported to penal servitude in the Andaman Islands.

Under Lord Auckland (1836-1842) the Company embarked upon a most unfortunate adventure in the north, where a threat from Russia had now begun to appear. An exiled King of Afghanistan, Shah Shuja, was in British territory in the Punjab, while at Kabul reigned Dost Mahomed Barakzai, an able but ambitious ruler who seemed to the Governor-General to be inclined to favour Slav intrigues. It was therefore determined to replace him by Shah Shuja, and a tripartite treaty was made between him, Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of the Punjab, and the Company, whereby the profits of the adventure were to be divided between them. Afghanistan was invaded in 1839.

For a time all went well. Shah Shuja entered Kabul in August, being sullenly received by the inhabitants. Dost Mahomed surrendered, and was taken a prisoner to Calcutta, where he was granted a pension of £20,000 a year. But the Afghans had no intention of becoming an Indian State. In November 1841 they murdered the two British diplomats in the capital, first Sir Alexander Burnes, and a few days later Sir William Macnaghten. Now follows a tale of disaster, almost unbelievable when compared with what Clive or Warren Hastings achieved in the face of similar or even greater odds. The British garrison in Kabul was short of food, and occupied an indefensible camp. It was an unwieldy body, numbering some 16,500 souls, including camp followers. The nearest British garrison was 100 miles away, at Jalalabad, where Sir Robert Sale was entrenched with a small force. The cold was bitter, for it was midwinter.

What should have been done it is useless now to consider. A vigorous defence in a better situation, such as the great fortress of the capital, or a fighting rearguard action might have saved the situation. Neither was attempted. Guns and ammunition, except what the men could carry, were given up. Treasure to the amount of £65,000 was yielded to the Afghan chiefs. The garrison wandered away from Kabul on a snowy morning in January 1842, and was immediately attacked. The conclusion of the story is enough to indicate its horror: only one man, Dr. Brydon, out of all the 16,500 who left Kabul, rode into the fort at Jelalabad, half-demented with hunger and wounds. A few hundred hostages were saved, and a few sepoy escaped singly to Peshawar. Everyone else perished during that awful retreat.

Lord Auckland was immediately recalled, being replaced by Lord Ellenborough, who reached Calcutta at the end of February 1842. Afghanistan was again invaded, but this time not with the object of removing Dost Mahomed from the throne, but of putting him back. "The Dost," as he had come to be known, having endeared himself by his manly bearing, remarked as he left the Indian capital for his own that he could not understand why the British troubled so much about his "poor barren country." Others asked the same question, for by October 1842 the situation was exactly as it had been four years earlier, except for ruined homes and mourning women, both in Afghanistan and India.

During the administration of Lord Hardinge (1844-1848), who was a veteran of the Napoleonic wars, the Company's army first came into conflict with the Sikhs. This would never have happened had Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, been living; but when he died in 1839<sup>1</sup> the Sikh

<sup>1</sup> Ranjit was fifty-seven when he died: illiterate, one-eyed, half-paralysed, and a heavy drinker, he nevertheless had a brilliant mind and that gift of charm (to which many Englishmen as well as Indians have paid tribute) which makes men ready to die for its possessor. All who came in contact with him were ready to follow him to the death; so much so that four of his wives and seven of his slave-girls—one not yet fourteen—were burned on his funeral pyre of sandalwood. (The proclamation abolishing suttee was not yet law in independent territory.)

nation was like a ship without a rudder, and there was the usual struggle for power in Lahore. Eventually a favourite wife of Ranjit's (a dancing-girl too shrewd to offer herself to the flames for an old sinner who went to bed reeling under the influence of an aphrodisiacal mixture of powdered pearls and brandy) succeeded in having her five-year-old son proclaimed as Maharaja, hoping to exercise the reality of power through her brother and her Brahmin lover. However, she was not the stuff of a queen, for the Sikh army soon began to suffer from confused and contradictory leadership.

In November 1845, without really thinking what they were doing—almost absent-mindedly—the Sikhs invaded English territory by crossing the Sutlej river between Ferozepore and Ludhiana.

They were over-confident (a sign of bad generalship never displayed by Ranjit Singh) because their army numbered 60,000 men and 150 guns, and they knew that the available British forces were small. At the first battle, in fact, that at Mudki, the British had 12,000 men and 44 guns. At the second, at Ferozeshah, they had 16,700 men and 68 guns: here the British drove the Sikhs from their main position, capturing 103 guns, but suffered 2,415 casualties in doing so. Meanwhile, further upstream at Aliwal (all four battles were fought in the arc of the Sutlej between Ferozepore and Ludhiana), another well-disciplined Sikh army had met the British, with heavy losses on both sides. Finally, at Sobraon, the British defeated some of the best fighting men of the Khalsa, losing 2,299 of their own soldiers. Mudki, Ferozeshah, Aliwal and Sobraon (also Chilianwala, Multan and Gujrat in the Second Sikh War of 1849) are battles to which both the British and the Sikhs can look back with pride. On those fields a friendship between two strong races was baptised and confirmed in blood. It has endured for a century, and there are few more remarkable facts in Indian history than that eight years after the British had annexed the Punjab (March 29th, 1849) the Sikhs fought with magnificent courage in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 on the side of their recent adversaries.

THE causes of the Mutiny can be briefly summarised as follows:—

1. The landed aristocracy were alarmed by the annexations carried out by Lord Dalhousie.<sup>1</sup>

2. The smaller landed proprietors saw no scope for themselves under the administration of the Company. They disliked the British law of property and preferred the good old days when the life of a money-lender was not sacrosanct.

3. The masses considered railways and telegraphs and other evidences of Western progress as dangerous inventions of the devil (as Mr. Gandhi does to-day) and connected them with Christianity. They were afraid of being converted to Christianity, as so many Hindus had been converted to Islam, by economic pressure or more forcible means.

Although the fear of Christianity was groundless, yet there were instances of proselytising (and not only by missionaries) which were hasty and ill-judged. The country needed time to adapt itself to Western ways, which had flooded in with a rush since the days of Clive. Mr. Frazer points out<sup>2</sup> that in 1855 "Lord Palmerston had expressed a hope not unlonged for by many when he announced that 'perhaps it might be our lot to confer on the countless millions of India a higher and nobler gift than any mere human knowledge,' a gift that, with a fervour rising above criticism, English officers had endeavoured to induce their sepoys to accept. 'I have been in the habit,' declared an English officer in 1857, 'of speaking to natives of all classes, sepoys and others, making no distinction, since there is no respect of persons with God, on the subject of our religion, in the highways, cities, bazaars, and villages—not in the lines and regimental bazaars. I have done this from a conviction that every converted Christian is expected, or rather commanded by the Scriptures, to make known the glad tidings of salvation to his fellow-creatures.' "

<sup>1</sup> Governor-General from 1848 to 1856.

<sup>2</sup> *British India*, by R. W. Frazer (Fisher Unwin, 1908).

Indians, however, could not be expected to accept these glad tidings without a certain cynicism. Men like Nicholson and Edwardes and Havclock were respected for their faith (Nicholson, in fact, made converts by the sheer force of his personality, and a sect of Hindus worshipped him, to his disgust, as the incarnation of the god of war), but the cult of the Christian God seemed to the average educated Indian connected with the dividends of the East India Company. Had they been able to read Lord Dalhousie's private diary they would have thought him a hypocrite, quite wrongly, for writing that it was his duty to the people of Oudh to annex that Province. "With this feeling in my mind," he wrote, "and in humble reliance on the blessing of the Almighty (for millions of His creatures will draw freedom and happiness from the change), I approach the execution of this duty, gravely and without solicitude, but calmly and altogether without doubt."

Lord Dalhousie's annexations were not all unjustifiable. The Burmese benefited by being freed from a corrupt and inefficient ruler. As to the Punjab, he was forced to fight the Second Sikh War, because the Council of Regency at Lahore had gone from bad to worse. The *casus belli* was the assassination of two British officers in Multan; but sooner or later the Sikh soldiers, with nothing to do and no strong ruler to guide them, would inevitably have raided British territory.

The Burma War and the Second Sikh War were necessary if the East India Company intended to establish peace on its frontiers; but all Lord Dalhousie's dealings with Indian Princes were vitiated by a fatal error. He would not admit that Hindus had a right to adopt a son, and therefore any State without a direct heir lapsed to the Company. Now in Hindu law an adopted son has exactly the same status as one begotten: a Prince (or commoner) had an absolute right to choose whom he would as his successor.

The first State to lapse to the Company owing to the absence of a direct heir was Satara, whose ruler represented the chieftainship of the Marathas. (The last Peshwa had already been exiled to Bithur.) Jhansi followed Satara;

then Nagpur; then Berar was taken from the Nizam of Hyderabad, in payment for arrears of subsidy. Finally came the annexation of Oudh, which had certainly been misruled for a century by its Nawabs; nevertheless, when King Wajid Ali was removed from Lucknow to Calcutta and given a pension of £12,000 a year, his deposition shook all the reigning houses in India.

Twenty years before Lord Dalhousie's time Lord Macaulay had written: "The destinies of our Indian Empire are covered in thick darkness. . . . It may be that by good government we may educate our subjects unto a capacity for better government; that having become instructed in European knowledge, they may in some future age demand European institutions. Whether such a day will ever come, I know not. But never will I attempt to avert or retard it. Whenever it comes it will be the proudest day in English history." The proud day was nearer than Macaulay thought.

Mountstuart Elphinstone wrote at about the same period in the same sense: "We must apply ourselves to bring the natives into a state that will admit of their governing themselves in a manner that may be beneficial to our interest as well as their own and that of the rest of the world; and to take the glory of the achievement, and the sense of having done our duty, as the chief reward for our exertions."

Sir Herbert Edwardes was of the same opinion. "God would never have put upon two hundred millions of men," he wrote, "the heavy trial of being subject to thirty millions of foreigners merely to have their roads improved, their canals constructed upon more scientific principles, their letters carried by a penny post, their messages flashed by lightning, their erroneous notions of geography corrected; nor even to have their internal quarrels stopped and peace restored.

"England, taught by both past and present, should set before her the noble policy of first fitting India for freedom and then setting her free. It may take years, it may take a century" (he wrote in 1861), "but it is a thing worth doing, and a thing that may be done. It is a distinct and intelligible



policy for England to pursue—a way for both countries out of the embarrassments of their twisted destinies.”<sup>1</sup>

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LORD DALHOUSIE'S policy was also distinct and intelligible, but it was one which led directly to disaster. It was reversed by Queen Victoria's proclamation of 1858, which confirmed the right of adoption.

That the revolt affected chiefly the Bengal Army was due to the fact that it was thoroughly discontented with the stoppage of certain allowances, known as *batta*, paid for service away from its own areas, also because many of its best officers had been transferred to service in the newly acquired province of the Punjab; and finally—the breeze that fanned a smoulder into flame—that the cartridges of the new Enfield rifle, which had recently been issued to the troops, had a greased patch at the top which had to be torn off with the teeth. At the Dumdum arsenal, near Calcutta, a workman quarrelled with a high-caste sepoy of the 34th Native Infantry. “Anyway,” he said, “who are you to abuse me? You lick of the fat of pigs and cows!”<sup>2</sup>

The story spread quickly. There were those interested in giving it currency, obviously, and in the prostitutes' quarter

<sup>1</sup> See *India and the Future*, by William Archer. (Hutchinson, 1917.)

<sup>2</sup> Previous cartridges had also had greased tops, but no one had ever questioned their composition. These new cartridges, unfortunately, did contain bovine tallow, the formula for their preparation having come from England. A staff officer in India had written a memorandum, which was mouldering neglected somewhere in Calcutta, to point out that the ingredients should be ceremonially pure from the Hindu and Moslem points of view, but no one in authority had paid any attention to it. When the mistake was discovered, immediate orders were issued to prevent the issue of further cartridges, but by then the damage had been done. Even then, explanations by trusted officers might have quieted the concern of the sepoys; unfortunately, a shocking blunder was made at Meerut, as we shall see. Nothing was to be expected from high authority. The Viceroy, Lord Canning (1856-1862), had only just arrived in Calcutta, and the Commander-in-Chief, General Anson, had also been newly appointed, and was at Umballa with all his staff a thousand miles from the seat of Government. Neither had had any experience of India.

of every regimental bazaar, the soldiers were taunted with breaking their caste. But no proof of an organised conspiracy has ever been discovered.

Nevertheless India knew a revolt was coming. Servants warned their masters that the sepoy would revolt; for instance, the billiard-marker of Her Majesty's 61st Foot at Ferozepore told the officers that everyone in the city was saying that blood would soon flow.

Such warnings made young subalterns laugh, but men like Sir Henry Lawrence began to prepare for evil days. A number of fires started in the thatched bungalows of up-country cantonments. Sepoys in a Lucknow hospital protested that a British doctor sniffed their medicine in order to pollute their caste. Others were suspicious of the flour they received in their rations, saying that it had been mixed with pounded bones. An old prophecy by an astrologer (or was it a new invention?) was circulated, that British rule would end a hundred years after the battle of Plassey—that is, on June 23rd, 1857. But the leave season opened as usual at the beginning of May. Sepoys due for furlough went peacefully to their homes, and some British officers to the hills. The others settled down to their normal hot-weather routine.

Meanwhile from village headman to village headman throughout Oudh and Bengal a mysterious signal passed. It was a small flat-jack of unleavened bread, with the request that he who received it should make four more and send them to other villages. Nobody knew what these *chuppaties* meant, or would admit they knew, but all understood that something strange would happen soon.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SEPOY MUTINY OF 1857

LORD CANNING had seen, before he went East, the danger of Lord Dalhousie's policy of escheat, for he had said at the farewell banquet given to him by the Court of Directors: "I wish for a peaceful term of office, but I cannot forget that in the sky of India, serene as it is, a small cloud may arise no larger than a man's hand, but which, growing larger and larger, may at last threaten to burst and overwhelm us with ruin."

The cloud came in the shape of an irascible Colonel of the 3rd Light Cavalry, stationed at Meerut, who returned from leave on April 23rd, 1857. He was determined to stand no nonsense about the greased cartridges, for a new drill had been promulgated by which the men could tear them with their hands instead of their teeth. So he ordered the skirmishers of his regiment to parade with the new rifle, with the intention, it seems, of making an example of them if they did not carry out the new drill. The men, suspicious, refused even to touch the cartridges. Obviously, if this was meant to be a "test case," preparations should have been made to disband the regiment in the event of a refusal, but nothing of this kind was planned. Eighty-five men were arrested, tried by court-martial, and awarded long terms of imprisonment, from six to ten years.<sup>1</sup>

Ten days later, on Saturday morning, May 9th, the eighty-five men were paraded in front of the whole garrison, which consisted, besides their own regiment, of the 11th and 20th Native Infantry, and of Her Majesty's Carabiniers and the 60th Rifles.<sup>1</sup>

On the parade ground the mutincers were stripped of their uniforms, and irons riveted on their legs and wrists; thus

<sup>1</sup> Meerut was the largest garrison in Northern India. Between it and Calcutta there were only three other British regiments.

disgraced and heavily fettered they were marched away from their comrades to be placed (with amazing incompetence) in charge of an Indian guard. It was a sickening sight, according to British officers present; and the long parade irritated all ranks.

Sunday morning passed quietly. Church Parade next day was ordered for British troops at 6.30 p.m. instead of the usual hour of six, and a rumour spread through the bazaar that the alteration of time was because instead of going to church the British intended to attack the sepoys as soon as it was dark. Just as the 60th Rifles and the Carabiniers had fallen in to march to St. John's Church, firing was heard in the Indian infantry lines.

The Colonel of the 11th Native Infantry rode to his men's quarters. They begged him to go away. Soon he fell, riddled with bullets fired by men of the more mutinous 20th Native Infantry. Now the sepoys were thoroughly aroused and began firing on all their officers, who were forced to escape, while the 3rd Light Cavalry galloped to the jail to release the men imprisoned on the previous day.

One troop of the 3rd, however, did not mutiny that night, because it was devoted to its commander, Captain Craigie. These men spent the night rescuing British women and children. It was only some days later—still loyal, but now to their comrades—that they took their leave of Craigie.

Many similar instances of sepoy chivalry could be given. One of the most striking is that of a guard of the 57th Native Infantry posted over the treasury at Ferozepore, who, when their battalion mutinied, hired a cart and took the treasure to the British officer at the fort. Having thus fulfilled what was an obligation of honour, the guard marched off to Delhi to join the great focus of rebellion.

Darkness fell in Meerut on May 10th upon a scene of great confusion. Bungalows were blazing. Bandits were looting the bazaar. Every European found alone was murdered; but most officers' wives and families were saved by the devotion of their Indian servants, who warned them of what was happening, so that they were able to escape to the British regiments, leaving their possessions behind.

The senior officer present was the divisional commander, Major-General Hewitt, who had ordered the idiotic parade on the previous day; but in actual command of the troops in Meerut was Brigadier Archdale Wilson. Both were old men. Wilson galloped to the parade ground of the 60th Rifles, and was soon joined by Hewitt. The 60th had by now been served out with ball ammunition, and the Carabiniers were assembling, but only half were mounted, the remainder had raw Australian horses that had not yet been ridden. A search was made for the mutineers, but none could be found. There was silence in the bazaar, and no one could be found in the crops and mango-groves surrounding the city. Only the glare of burning bungalows remained to tell of the night's work.

The mutineers had made haste away to Delhi, forty miles distant, some on horseback and others in pony-carts. A subaltern implored Hewitt to let him ride to Delhi to warn the British there, but the old general refused. He had no direct evidence as to the direction the rebels had taken. So he did nothing. He seems to have been so dazed that he did not even telegraph to Delhi, which he might have done before the line was cut next morning. Unbelievable as it seems, neither horse, foot, nor guns stirred from Meerut until June 24th.

The contrast in Mutiny characters are glaring, like the burning countryside in which they move, or like the people in a sensational novel. We see the fervent Baptist General, Havelock, praying with his men while other commanders encourage their soldiers to loot or commit atrocities. We see young Hodson acting with ruthless speed, and old Hewitt dawdling; prize agents in the rear pocketing jewels for themselves while other officers die of overwork in the front line; and—typical English scene—in the midst of all the stern anxieties at Ferozepore, where the sepoys have mutinied and almost captured the arsenal, the subalterns of Her Majesty's 61st Foot, expecting a raid at any moment, stage a mock attack on their senior officers: a whistle is blown in the small hours of the night and the subalterns set upon the sleeping Captains and Majors with their bolsters. Then,

"thoroughly worn out by our exertions, we all slept soundly till break of day."<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards they parade to see some mutineers blown from nine-pounder guns; and within a few months many of these pillow-fighters have died on the bastions or in the streets of Delhi.

On Monday morning, May 11th, the sepoy troops in Delhi had paraded early on the Ridge. When they returned, the whole great city was throbbing with excitement. The mutineers from Delhi had arrived, in their French-grey uniforms, and had demanded and been granted an audience of the Great Moghul. Now they were camped in the Palace. English blood had already flowed there, and the young Moghul Princes had ordered Englishwomen to be stripped naked and harnessed to carts. Other things had happened to white girls which need not be described. The jewellers and merchants buried their goods and bolted their shop fronts, but the criminal element in the city was not to be denied. Doors were kicked open. Houses were ransacked. As more and more of the rebel soldiery poured in, wild stories of the success of the Mutiny spread from lip to lip. Soon there would be no "White Monkeys" left.

Outside the city, at the telegraph office, lately installed, two boys tapped out the following unofficial message to their friends up the line at Lahore and Peshawar:

*"We must leave office. All the bungalows are being burnt down by the sepoys of Meerut. They came in this morning. Don't roll to-day.<sup>2</sup> Mr. C. Todd is dead, we think. He went out this morning and has not returned yet. We heard that nine Europeans were killed. Good-bye."*

This was followed at four o'clock by a message from Brigadier Graves, commanding the Delhi garrison, to Army Headquarters at Umballa. (The garrison consisted of two native battalions and a native battery, most of whom had mutinied.) He wrote: "*Cantonment in a state of siege.*"

<sup>1</sup> *A Narrative of the Siege of Delhi*, by Charles John Griffiths (Murray, 1910).

<sup>2</sup> "Don't roll" meant do not send private messages between operators. Todd, the telegraph master, had gone out to try to mend the Meerut line, and was killed by the mutineers.

*Mutineers from Meerut, 3rd Light Cavalry, numbers not known, said to be one hundred and fifty men, cut off communication with Meerut, taken possession of bridge of boats. 54th N.I. sent against them but would not act. Several officers killed and wounded. City in a state of considerable excitement. Troops sent down, but nothing certain yet. Further information will be forwarded."*

The telegraph had not yet reached Simla, so Sir Henry Barnard, the Adjutant-General, sent a galloper up to the Commander-in-Chief. He arrived on the afternoon of the 12th, just as General Anson was sitting down to dinner. One of the guests has noted in her diary that he put the message under his soup plate.

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NOTHING could be done at Delhi until reinforcements arrived. Would the Punjab stay loyal? There were two big arsenals there, at Ferozepore and Phillaur, another at Delhi, and others along the Ganges line at Cawnpore and Allahabad. It was vital to get reinforcements down from the Punjab by the Grand Trunk Road, and up from Calcutta by the Ganges. (The railway had only been built for 120 miles from Calcutta to Raniganj.)

Much depended on the Punjab, with its well-armed and warlike people, and the Punjab held, owing to the masterful personalities of John Lawrence, Edwardes, Nicholson and Hodson.

At Army Headquarters General Anson did his best. He hurried down from his hilltop, but died of cholera on May 27th. From Calcutta Lord Canning telegraphed to divert to India some regiments on their way to China, and to Sir James Outram, on his way back from Persia, not to stop at Bombay, but to bring his force round by sea to the capital. Other British regiments were brought from Burma, Ceylon, and Madras, but the administrative machine creaked badly. It was many weeks before transport and equipment could be collected, owing to passive resistance; but this could have been overcome. There was a kind, mild Governor in Calcutta with a tendency to wishful thinking, not a Clive or Akbar. He wrote at the end of May: "A very few

days now will see an end of this daring mutiny." In fact it was only beginning.

In Cawnpore, old Sir Hugh Wheeler (he was seventy-five) knew very well that the sepoys were in a dangerous mood, but in his opinion the people as a whole were on our side, and did not want the old anarchy to return. Probably he was right, had the situation being handled with energy. His sources of information were good: he had spent fifty years in India, and was married to an Indian lady, believed to have been a relation of the Nana Sahib.

The Nana, as we have seen, was the adopted son of the last of the Peshwas, and was living at Bithur, thirteen miles upstream from Cawnpore. Rich and plump and jovial, with close-set twinkling eyes in a face scarred by small-pox, and wearing generally the Naulakha, a famous necklace of pearls worth £90,000, he was a well-known figure in Cawnpore, and often entertained the British officers with lavish hospitality. But he hated the East India Company, who in his view had defrauded him of a pension of £80,000 a year.

The Nana told the Wheelers much of what was going on. He represented himself as a friend of theirs, and it is reasonable to assume (though historians differ) that in this he spoke the truth, for he twice sent word to them of the intentions of the mutineers. He said, and Wheeler believed, that the sepoys would certainly mutiny, and would leave Cawnpore and march north to Delhi. Had there been a directing brain in the conspiracy (the Nana showed no military aptitude) these are surely the orders the rebels would have received: to concentrate their forces—seventy battalions of British-trained infantry and twenty regiments of cavalry—on attacking the Ridge at Delhi, and then raise the Punjab against the British.<sup>1</sup> And that is what in fact the mutineers did begin to do. They started north, then changed their

<sup>1</sup> If the mutineers had done this, the reconquest of India might have taken many years, but in the end some European nation would have become the paramount power there, because modern armaments, of which the Enfield rifle was the herald, require an industrial organisation which India did not possess.



minds and came back. Again the Nana warned the Wheelers that the sepoys were returning.

Now Wheeler made a ghastly mistake. In preference to an excellent fort which was available, stacked with ammunition and food, he chose as his "keep" or stronghold some half-built barracks close to his own house.<sup>1</sup> Only on the assumption that his enemies would leave him alone, and that he would soon be reinforced (as he should have been), was the choice of such a site intelligible. A mud wall four feet high was thrown up round a couple of houses used as hospitals (with thatched roofs, one of which caught fire), and into this miserable post he crowded the 450 men, 330 women and children, and 6 guns in his charge.

The British were attacked on June 5th by some 3,000 mutineers, well supplied with artillery. Water was impossible to draw by day. Medicines were scanty. The ammunition was limited, for all the reserves were in the fort, now in the hands of the mutineers.

In desperate anxiety Wheeler waited for reinforcements, which did not arrive owing to a mutiny farther down-stream at Allahabad, which deprived the relieving force from Calcutta of 1,600 bullocks collected for their transport. If Allahabad had held, Cawnpore would have been relieved, and Lucknow might never have been invested, for Sir Henry Lawrence did not retire into the Residency until July 1st.

For three weeks Wheeler's small garrison kept the mutineers at bay, with heroism unsurpassed in the records of the Mutiny. But their supplies were running out. All the gunners were dead or disabled, after firing their last rounds of grape in women's stockings. When the rains came in July, the wretched defences would be washed away.

On June 23rd the Nana sent an Anglo-Indian lady (Mrs. Jacobs) into Wheeler's camp with an offer to allow the whole European population of Cawnpore to leave on

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-General Sir George Macmunn suggests in *The Indian Mutiny in Perspective* (Bell, 1931) that Lady Wheeler prevailed on her husband to do this to save him the strain of going daily to the fort, which was three miles away.

honourable terms. Boats would be provided to take them to Allahabad. Each man would be allowed to carry his rifle and 60 rounds of ammunition. After a council of war it was decided to accept, since it was then only a matter of days before surrender became inevitable. By themselves the garrison might have fought on, or fought their way out, but this was impossible with women and children.

The garrison marched out on June 28th to a landing stage on the Ganges about a mile away. The mutineers were friendly, even helping the women to carry their young children. Everything seemed going well, and soon everyone had settled down in the boats allotted. What relief young mothers must have felt at that moment, only to be so hideously disillusioned the next! General Wheeler was just answering a note from the Nana wishing him a safe journey, and was about to hand it to the rebel messenger, who was standing smartly to attention before him, when a shot rang out. Who fired it will never be known. It is generally believed that the whole operation was planned by the Nana or by one of his agents. But if so, why was the party not attacked during the embarkation, instead of after the boats were ready to leave? And why not have killed the women and children outright, instead of saving them for future execution? (True, they may have been kept as hostages. There are many minor puzzles about the Nana.)

A few boats got away, but everyone in them, except four men, who swam down the Ganges for six miles, was killed by the pursuing cavalry of the rebels. Of those not shot or drowned at the embarkation point, all the men were shot that afternoon. The women and children, now numbering some 200, were locked up in a house in Cawnpore.

Meanwhile Major-General Havelock was hurrying up from Calcutta as fast as the heat, the lack of transport, and the cholera which had broken out amongst his men, would let him. He had disembarked at Calcutta, tired from the Persian campaign and aged sixty-two, but (as he said when dying) he had so ruled his life that he was ready to surrender it at any moment to his Maker. His constant prayer was to live long enough to have independent command of a force

in the field, and it was now granted, though he had only 1,500 Europeans and 6 guns. He arrived at Allahabad at the end of June, and went forward to Cawnpore on July 7th, not knowing of the tragedy there. Driving the rebels before him in one battle after another, he was close to Cawnpore on July 15th, where he smashed the rebel army with the irresistible fury of his attack.

The Nana went back to his hotel on a fast elephant. What was to be done to the women, now that the British were at the gates? There can be no doubt that the order to murder them was his, but that he gave it because of any lust for cruelty is improbable under the circumstances. He was thinking of his own skin, of proving to his followers that he was with them to the end.

The sepoy on guard refused to obey the Nana's order: they were soldiers, and would not kill women. Four butchers were found in the bazaar who did the work with knives. The bodies were thrown into an empty well close by, and were there found by Havelock's men on July 17th. Every rebel they caught was made to lick up a part of the blood, in the room where the butchers had been, before they killed him.

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**H**AVELOCK had won four victories, and was to win more, but he could not push through to the relief of Lucknow, which was now being besieged by 50,000 rebels, for he had scarcely a thousand fit men left. It was not until September that he was able to go forward.

Meanwhile, at Lucknow, Sir Henry Lawrence, who had managed to keep Oudh more or less quiet until the end of June, had fought a disastrous action with his one British regiment at Chinhut, where he was defeated, and had had to retire into the Residency on July 1st, where he had already accumulated large quantities of stores and ammunition.

The besieged in Lucknow numbered 3,000 all told, of whom 1,008 were combatant Europeans, and 712 loyal sepoy. The remainder consisted of 600 women and children, and 680 servants and other non-combatants. At first the rebel forces surrounding them were comparatively small,

but they rapidly increased until, as news of the Cawnpore disaster spread, they outnumbered the defenders by twenty to one. Rumours were rife that the Shah of Persia was about to invade (on the contrary he offered the British 30,000 men) and that all the English in India were killed. So the forces of the besiegers grew, and gathered round a favourite wife of the deposed King of Oudh. At Delhi, 300 miles away, the British were still camped on the Ridge, apparently powerless to attack the capital, and all the intervening country swarmed with free-lances.

Sir James Outram, who had also been recalled from Persia, joined Havelock on September 13th at Cawnpore. The advance began on the 19th; and Outram, who had killed tigers with a hogspear, decided never to draw his sword on the rebels, but to knock them on the head with a stick—presumably to show his cavalry what easy game they were. Yet they were tough, some of these sepoys, still wearing the scarlet coats and medals of Her Majesty, and if the small British force had not been led by fighting generals it would never have got through the maze of gardens and palaces on the eastern side of Lucknow.

On September 23rd Havelock and Outram arrived at the Alum Bagh, a large walled garden two miles south of the rebel city. The garrison in the Residency, after eighty-five days of agony—only a third of its original defenders survived—now heard glorious news. Delhi had fallen. The Highlanders and Sikhs were advancing. Relief was close.

The circumstances of the siege are dramatic, for here were 1,000 Europeans (of whom 150 were civilians) and 750 Indians, holding some 50,000 mutineers at bay. Lawrence, great man though he was, had disastrously mishandled the battle of Chinhut, which compelled him to retire to the Residency. There he was hit by a shell on July 1st, and died on the 4th, his last thoughts being for his soldiers: that he should be buried with any of them dying at the same time, and that on his grave should be written: "Here lies Henry Lawrence, who tried to do his duty. May God have mercy on his soul." He was dearly loved by all, and the men who carried him to burial lifted the shroud to kiss him.

Without sleep or rest, burdened with the constant grief of seeing their loved ones die of wounds and sickness, and with growing anxiety over shortage of ammunition, with mines continually being sprung in the ramparts, and siege guns battering them at a range of a hundred yards, the devoted garrison held grimly to its position. A few went mad amongst the English. A few turned traitor amongst the Indians. But if ever there were heroes worthy of honour, it was the sepoys who stuck to their posts. They had nothing to lose by going over to the other side, yet they endured those tremendous days, and shared in the final triumph.

There had been many earlier rumours of relief and many disappointments. Brigadier Inglis—commanding in the Residency after Lawrence's death—held a council of war during one of the darkest moments to decide what to do if the besiegers broke through. The men would die at their posts, of course, but the women? Should they be allowed to commit suicide rather than suffer the fate of those at Cawnpore? As a Christian, he decided that they could not. But now very different thoughts were in every mind. How were the defenders to help the troops coming in from the Alum Bagh? It must have been on September 24th or 25th, when everyone was thinking of the triumphant meeting to come, that—

Up spoke a Scottish lassie, with her ear unto the ground,  
"Dinna ye hear it? Dinna ye hear it? The pipes of Havelock sound!"

A myth, perhaps, but she will remain in mind as long as the tower of the Residency stands above that cellar where the women and children had passed so many days and nights of anguish, and were now listening to the skirl of pipes and the thunder of the relieving guns.

On the bright cool morning of Friday, September 25th, 1857, the final attack began. Havelock took risks which left even the bold Outram aghast. The Highlanders swept everything before them, but casualties were heavy. That evening the advance guard was close to the Residency. There remained a maze of narrow streets through which a way must be fought. Could it be done? Outram wanted to close up the

ranks and attack next day, but Havelock insisted on getting in that night, and so they did, the two generals leading their men. Outram, on a big Australian horse, was the first to ride in, closely followed by Havelock, fighting with his troops on foot. Big, bearded, haggard soldiers rushed in through the Bailey Guard Gate, seizing and hugging the children that came to greet them, with tears rolling down their cheeks in thankfulness that they had been able to save them from the fate of Cawnpore.

For three months those in Lucknow had had no touch with the outside world: now there was news (inevitably some of it of sorrow and terrible deeds) and hope and companionship and strength. The survivors (of whom I knew several) always spoke with glistening eyes of that night of pride and thankfulness and eager talk, when no one slept.

The Residency had been entered, but it was not relieved. Havelock's losses were too severe to allow the garrison to be withdrawn, and it was not until November 23rd that Sir Colin Campbell was able to cut his way through the 50,000 enemies who still lurked in the city, and remove the women and children to Cawnpore.

To-day, when we British remember the trim lawns of the Residency, and above them the Union Jack which is never lowered, we think of recent days, and other fights with an unlowered flag. And we do not forget how many of the garrison of Lucknow were Indian soldiers.

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**D**ELHI, which should never have fallen into the hands of the rebels if General Hewitt had acted promptly, still stood defiant, its rose-red walls and white domes rising like a mirage before the British camped on the Ridge.

Owing to various deaths and many illnesses, it was Brigadier Archdale Wilson, of Meerut, who was now in command. He was an unenterprising soldier, but a good organiser. Perhaps a more sanguine temperament in command of the British forces before Delhi might have led them to disaster, for, as Wilson wrote to the Commanding Royal

Engineer on August 20th: "Delhi is seven miles in circumference, filled with an immense fanatical population, garrisoned by fully 40,000 soldiers, armed and disciplined by ourselves, with 114 pieces of artillery mounted on the walls, with the largest magazine of shot, shell and ammunition in the Upper Provinces, besides some 60 pieces of field artillery, all of our own manufacture and manned by artillerymen drilled and taught by ourselves, the Fort itself having been strengthened by perfect flanking defences erected by our own engineers, and a glacis which prevents our guns from breaching the walls less than eight feet from the top."

This was true enough (though a strange letter to write to a subordinate), but it was also evident that unless Delhi *was* taken, the British would have to reconquer India where Clive began. A few days before the assault, Nicholson received a telegram from John Lawrence to say that unless the capital fell within forty-eight hours he could not guarantee to hold the Punjab. "I suppose you'll show that to Wilson?" said a friend. "No," said Nicholson, "it would kill him."

The British forces available were 3,300 effective Europeans (3,000 more were in hospital), 5,400 sepoys, and 2,500 soldiers sent by allied Rajas. A siege train arrived early in September on sixteen elephants from Ferozepore, with ammunition which was optimistically described as "enough to grind Delhi to powder." On September 4th there was a conference at Wilson's headquarters, attended by all senior officers, at which it was the intention to supersede Wilson by John Nicholson unless the former consented to an immediate attack. He did consent, and the plans as approved by him were good, and went through with few hitches, considering the difficulties of the task.

In preparation for the assault, timed for dawn on September 14th, artillery had pounded the huge battlements for six days and nights, lighting up with its glare the surrounding trees and gardens, as the walls slowly crumbled. At dawn there fell a sudden silence, broken by a cheer from the 60th Rifles as they moved forward in skirmishing line, followed by the first and second columns, which were to

assault the Kashmir Bastion and the Water Gate. Many were killed in crossing the twenty-foot-deep ditch in front of the walls. Nicholson, leading the first column, was across first, and mounted the battlements. Men saw him then for the last time in the glory of his strength, with sword drawn, his tall, well-knit figure outlined against the rising sun: a little later he was shot down by a sniper.

Meanwhile a breaching party of engineers had crept up to the Kashmir Gate, to blow it in and allow the third column to pass. They carried their powder and port-fires right under the muskets of the enemy, passing them from one to the other as they fell, until the fuse was set and the gate fell with a tremendous crash. It was a glorious feat of arms, and three of that gallant eight were Indians.<sup>1</sup>

That was the beginning of a week of stubborn fighting, and it was not until Monday, September 21st, that a salute of guns was fired from the Palace, announcing that Delhi was British. Nicholson died on the 23rd, having lived long enough to see victory crown his work.

The British casualties in taking Delhi were 66 officers and 1,104 men. Amongst the 10,000 men engaged in the siege from first to last, 3,837 were killed or wounded. Prize money distributed—five years later—amounted to £17 per surviving soldier, £87 for subalterns, £107 for captains, and more for senior ranks: a small total compared to the loot of Timur or Nadir Shah, but the last time that any British soldiers have received a reward for the capture of a city.

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**B**AHADUR SHAH, the decrepit old Emperor, fled for refuge to Humayun's tomb, four miles south of the Palace. There he was found by Hodson of the Guides, the dashing young cavalry leader who was on Wilson's Intelligence Staff,

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant Salkeld (died of wounds), Lieutenant Home (died a week later by accident), Sergeant Carmichael (killed), Sergeant Smith (died 1864), Corporal Burgess (killed), Havildar Madhu (wounded), Havildar Tilak Singh (wounded), Sepoy Ram Nath (killed), and Bugler Hawthorne (died 1879). Home, Smith and Hawthorne (who sounded the "Advance" for the third column) were awarded the Victoria Cross.



and was escorted back to headquarters in a palanquin, followed by a dazed crowd who watched Hodson taking away their Emperor without active protest.

Next day Hodson found the two eldest sons and the grandson of the Great Moghul at the same place. They surrendered to him unconditionally (hoping no doubt to be treated as the Emperor had been), but near the Delhi gate he halted the pony-cart in which they were travelling and shot them all three through the heart. Their bodies were taken to the Chandni Chowk, and laid out there for three days, at the spot where dead British women had been exposed. Parliament demanded the trial of Hodson, but meanwhile he had died a soldier's death at the second relief of Lucknow under Sir Colin Campbell.

The old Emperor was tried, and deported to Rangoon, where he died as a State prisoner in 1862.

Some ugly vengeance were exacted here and there, but on the whole the British behaved with justice to their enemies, and imposed on the guilty penalties less drastic than would have been inflicted by any Oriental power in similar circumstances. Order had to be maintained with a strong hand. Of that there could be no question, after the anarchy which followed the collapse of other rulers.

It was a year before the fires of the Mutiny were extinguished, but with the fall of Delhi in September, and the relief of Lucknow in November, no one doubted that Great Britain was the paramount power in India.

## CHAPTER VIII

AFTER 1857

"CLEMENCY" CANNING stood calm amidst a clamour for vengeance which came largely from people in Simla and Calcutta who had been farthest from danger. "I will not govern in anger," he said. "I will never allow an angry or an indiscriminating act or word to proceed from the Government of India as long as I am responsible for it."

On November 1st, 1858, he held a Durbar at Allahabad to read the Proclamation of Queen Victoria:

"We hold Ourselves bound," the Queen declared, "to the natives of Our Indian territories by the same obligations of duty which bind Us to all Our other subjects, and those obligations, by the blessing of God, We shall faithfully and conscientiously fulfil. Firmly relying Ourselves on the truth of Christianity . . . We disclaim alike the right and the desire to impose Our convictions on any of Our subjects."

To the Indian Princes she made clear that Lord Dalhousie's policy of escheat was rescinded:

"We desire no extension of Our present territorial possessions; and while We will permit no aggression on Our dominions or Our rights to be attempted with impunity, We shall allow no encroachment on those of others. We shall respect the rights, dignity and honour of the Native Princes as Our own; and We desire that they, as well as Our own subjects, should enjoy that prosperity and that social advancement which can only be secured by peace and good government."

And last but not least: "It is Our Royal will and pleasure that, so far as may be, Our subjects, of whatever race and creed, be freely and impartially admitted to offices in Our service, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, ability and integrity duly to discharge."

These were careful and solemn statements, which pro-

duced a deep effect in India, and to which the British people are still bound in spirit and letter.

Peace was proclaimed throughout India on July 8th, 1859. The Indian Army passed under the direct control of the Crown, and the proportion of Indian to British soldiers, which had been six to one before the Mutiny—more exactly, 39,000 British to 225,000 Indians—was now reduced to two to one. The artillery was kept wholly in British hands, except for a few mountain batteries, and has so remained to the present day.

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COLONEL CHARLES JAMES ROBARTS, who raised the regiment of Bengal Lancers in which I had the honour to serve, was not entirely typical of the Englishmen of post-Mutiny days in India (for he had large independent means, for one thing), yet he was representative, I think, of those care-free days when Indian and British met on closer terms of intimacy than they do at present. Both races had then been close to realities. After the fight, the protagonists shook hands and appreciated each other's good qualities.

Robarts identified himself so closely with India that he had married an Afghan wife. The 17th Cavalry, which he raised in Meerut in the autumn of 1858, came to be nicknamed "Robarts' Robbers," because he enlisted all kinds of wild and virile races from the Punjab and even from across the Afghan border. The tradition, as I heard it from men who served with him, was that he always had a handkerchief in one hand and a club in the other, to weep with the afflicted or to castigate delinquents.

Tradition also alleged, but wrongly, I feel sure, that he allowed his bungalow to be used as a storehouse for loot.

It is certain, however, that discipline was of a primitive kind during the period of his command. He hated any sort of *dikk*—that is, unnecessary trouble or fuss—and he never bothered his head about accounts. Apparently he paid his troopers what he thought they were worth, and irregularly. As to the horses, it was very difficult to know

which were his own and which were Government's, for he kept them indiscriminately in his own stable or in the ranks.

This was possible because in the Indian Cavalry in those days a remarkable organisation existed—a relic from Moghul days—known as the *sillidar* system, which was undoubtedly a cheap and efficient way of raising an army. A flat rate per trooper was paid to the Colonel, for which he provided all the men, horses, equipment and transport required; everything, in short, needed to make a fighting unit except rifles and ammunition. This rate was £2 2s. a month, and was credited to a fund, known as the Chanda, from which horses, mules, camels, and saddlery were bought, as well as the grain and fodder required, leaving only a few shillings a month as the pay of the trooper.

The nineteen regiments of *sillidar* cavalry existing up to 1922 were recruited from specific areas. Indian officers and N.C.O.'s brought men—often their relations—to the units in which they were serving, so that the regiment was like a large family.

The system was administered as a joint-stock company, of which the Colonel was the chairman. Regimental meetings (*durbars*) were held weekly, when the Colonel consulted the senior Indian officers as to how the money in the Chanda Fund should be spent. It was the men's money, and every trooper had a personal stake in the regiment. Alas! the *sillidar* system was too irregular to please "higher authority," and India lost the services of many gallant yeomen who had been glad to enlist for the sake of *izzat*: the honour of being in a good regiment, rather than for the half-crown a month they received as pocket-money after all deductions had been made.

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ROBARTS had married a lady related to one of the Afghan ruling houses, who had a numerous retinue of maids and relations. In his bungalow he maintained, besides his family, guests, and household servants, a racing stable, a pack of hounds, peregrines and falcons for hawking, twenty

regimental orderlies, and fifty or sixty troop horses. More than four hundred people fed daily from his kitchens.

"He was a Nawab and lived like one," the old Indian officers of my regiment told me. (He was also a good Oriental scholar, however.)

It was a jolly, friendly life this young Englishman must have led, in a thatched, mud-walled bungalow in the centre of an immense garden, containing a whole little world of its own.

Soon after dawn it comes to life. Falconers in padded gloves are gentling their charges, dog-boys are massaging the Rampuri hounds with oil, sleek Arab ponies are whinnying as they are strapped down by a couple of *syces*; *sikligars* are sharpening hog-spears and harness, *dirzies* are sewing, *bheesties* with their waterskins are sprinkling the dusty flowers; and some *mihrahis* (for the Afghan princess must have her nautch music) are discussing the gossip of the bazaars.

Robarts comes out in his top-boots and loose khaki<sup>1</sup> shirt, with a small Kabul turban twisted round his long black hair. He swings into his saddle; there is a bustle among the falconers and orderlies, and a cavalcade of hunters, long-dogs and hawks start for the parade ground, where the regiment is drawn up under command of the Adjutant.

As Robarts arrives, a trumpeter sounds "Carry lance!" Big, heavily bearded Afghans are there, and stout Sikhs, and fierce Jats, Rohillas, Rajputs, men whose ancestors lived and died by fighting, and who hope to do the same themselves. The routine of formal cavalry drill is not for them during these early post-Mutiny years. Many are veterans. All are good shots and keen on mounted sports, such as tent-pegging and bare-back wrestling.

"A fine day," says Robarts to his Adjutant, after inspecting the regiment. "You can dismiss the men. Anyone who wants can come hunting with me."

<sup>1</sup> Khaki for uniform—then called *Multani Khaki*, Multan dust-colour—was adopted by the British and Indian troops in the Mutiny because the white uniform usually worn in the hot weather was impossible to keep clean, besides being conspicuous.

Thirty sowars on swish-tailed country-bred mares of the famous Parrat stock, ridden on a spiked snaffle and a tight standing-martingale, come out to join Robarts' party. These men were the grandfathers of those I knew, who are now greybeards themselves. The breed survives, and it is just as representative of India, and more influential, when we get back to realities, than the clerkly Indians we see in London or New York.

By nine o'clock the hunting party is back in the lines, having bagged a jackal and a couple of hares. Stables are already in full swing, for work began early and finished early in those days. Near the Horse Hospital, the Adjutant and some native officers are drinking green tea out of small cups in the Turki fashion. Robarts joins them, and here the business of the regiment is transacted in public—rarely at a desk, or in an office.

He deals with his men shrewdly, sympathetically, quickly; and speaks to them equally well in four languages—Pushtu, Persian, Panjabi, and Urdu. He rarely signs his name. A Persian writer (the Naquib) stands behind him, holding a small piece of paper in the palm of his left hand and dipping his reed pen into an ink-bottle at his belt. He is a peripatetic reporter of the Colonel's words, and what the Colonel says is often wise and witty.

Sometimes it is also prophetic. If Robarts' advice had been followed in 1855 there might have been no Mutiny. Who knows? He was already a distinguished soldier (with sixteen years' service, including the campaign in Afghanistan of 1840, and the Sikh Campaign of 1848) when he predicted that the discontent of the sepoy would shake our Empire to its foundations. But John Company laughed at his fears, so in disgust he took his three years' furlough just at a time when his qualities as a cavalry leader would have been invaluable. By doing so he escaped the fate of the officers of his regiment (the 43rd Native Infantry), who were all murdered by their men.

That is all of the past. Robarts made India his permanent home, and rarely wrote to relatives in England. It is probable that he was happy with his Afghan wife, for he lived

with her until his death fifteen years later, without returning home.

What was she like? I often wanted to ask this question of a youth named Abdul Gyas, a grandson of Robarts and a squadron-writer in the regiment, when I joined it in Bannu in 1907; but he was dying of consumption (we buried him the following winter) and somehow I missed the opportunity.

Robarts' photograph, which used to be in the mess of the 17th Cavalry, shows him as a slight, active-looking man in a loose coat and a flowing tie. No doubt the white ants have eaten the picture by now.

All physical traces of Robarts and his Afghan princess will soon vanish, if they have not already done so, but it is good to have recalled him out of the quick twilight of the country of his adoption, for he was a type of Englishman who made the Empire popular, and therefore possible. This is a point sometimes overlooked.

The British have failed in this, neglected that. True, but on the whole, and until recent years, they have succeeded in making *pax Britannica* popular. And that is much.

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ON the civil side of the administration after the Mutiny the Moghul system was not disturbed, but adapted, so that the "factors" or "writers" of the East India Company, who had collected the revenues under the nominal authority of the Great Moghul, did the same for the British Queen, as Collectors or Deputy Commissioners of the Government of India.

Handsome pensions and grants of land were given to those who had helped the British. Calcutta University was founded in 1858 (and has grown to be the largest university in the world with 27,000 students) at a time when, up-country, Indians were still being tried by drum-head court-martial for having fought against the British. However, thanks to Canning (and common sense, which is not the prerogative of Viceroys), the horrible penalties which had been imposed in

the heat of action at Cawnpore and elsewhere were no longer countenanced. As to the Nana Sahib, he was never captured. He is supposed to have died in Nepal, or in the foothills of the Himalayas, and carried to his unknown burning-place many secrets of the Mutiny, now unlikely ever to come to light. In 1878 a man said to be the Nana was arrested, and rumour alleged that the Indian Government forbade him to be identified. Another rumour, equally improbable, is that in a cave-temple near Poona secrets about the Nana are handed down from father to son.

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THE Mutiny had cost India £37,000,000, and taxation had to be increased. Nevertheless the peasantry were not on the whole discontented. It was a matter of small concern even to the peasants of Oudh, that the beef-eating, hard-riding British were in power, rather than a champagne-swilling monarch who was carried about in a palanquin by a bevy of naked negresses; but on the whole they preferred Queen Victoria, whose servants were more efficient and collected the taxes more fairly.

The population and the land revenue increased by leaps and bounds. Lord Canning left India in peace and prosperity in 1862, but the anxiety of his Viceroyalty had broken his health. He died a month after his return to England.

A terrible famine occurred under the Viceroyalty of Sir John Lawrence, in Orissa in 1866, which called attention to those periodic scourges that had devastated India ever since man first scraped a living on the peninsula; and it was Lawrence, with his great knowledge of the country (he had served in every rank of the Service from assistant magistrate to Viceroy), who first held District Officers personally responsible for the health and happiness of the people under their charge, and began to tackle the problem of famine relief in an organised manner.

It was Lawrence, also, who formulated the policy of non-interference in affairs outside a clearly defined Indian



frontier. Had this counsel been followed in later years the Empire would have been saved much blood and treasure.

In 1863 the Amir of Afghanistan, Dost Muhammad Khan, died in Kabul, leaving a younger son, Sher Ali, as his chosen heir. There were eighteen brothers to contest the throne, however, and between them Afghanistan became a witch's cauldron of vendettas and intrigue. Sir John Lawrence sent cordial letters of congratulation to whichever brother succeeded in establishing himself at Kabul, Herat, or Kandahar: eventually Sher Ali prevailed over his kindred, and was acknowledged by Lawrence as Amir, in a letter also offering him £60,000 and 3,500 muskets. It was a handsome present, and though refused by the crafty Amir, who was then intriguing with the Russians, it undoubtedly led to Sher Ali's visit to Ambala in 1869, when he was welcomed at an impressive review of troops by the next Viceroy, Lord Mayo.

For three years the splendid vigour of Lord Mayo, following on the wise administration of Sir John Lawrence, gave India an agricultural department, financial autonomy and a measure of self-government in the Provinces, a better customs system and an immense extension of roads, railways and canals. His career ended untimely by a convict's dagger, while he was on a visit to the Andaman Islands.

With the opening of the Suez Canal (1869) India entered on a period of prosperity clouded only by the terrible famine of 1876-1877, and the constant threat of Russian invasion from the north.

When Lord Lytton proclaimed the Queen to be Empress of India at another great Durbar in Delhi, on January 1st, 1877, the worst of the famine was over, or at any rate relief measures were in hand; and although they failed on that occasion to save an appalling loss of life, never again has such a calamity befallen India under British rule.

In the autumn of 1878, Lord Lytton, who thought the Amir of Afghanistan a crafty and contumacious rascal,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "We mistrust you," the Amir had written to him in reply to a request that a British Envoy should be received in Kabul; "and We fear you will write all sorts of reports about Us, which will some day be

playing off Russia against Britain, and *vice versa*, "in the position of an earthen jar between two iron pots," declared war on Sher Ali, and occupied three of the passes leading into his country.

Sher Ali fled, and his son, Yakub Khan, was compelled to sign the treaty of Gandamak (1879) whereby a British envoy was received in Kabul. Sir Louis Cavagnari entered the capital in state, with seventy-five men of the Guides Cavalry, in July, 1879, but gloomily, having read history. Very soon, as Lord Lawrence had previously warned the House of Lords, the Afghans revolted at a policy which could only have led to their eventual subjugation.

Cavagnari and his men fought well, but the Kabul fortress fell in September, 1879. Cavagnari and the whole garrison perished by fire, or by the long knives of the Afghans, a sacrifice (unfortunately not the first or last) to politicians who pursued a "forward policy" without the arms or men to make it effective.

Sir Frederick Roberts (afterwards Lord Roberts) moved a column of British and Indian troops by forced marches up the Kurram Valley, and retook Kabul within five weeks. Later, to retrieve another disaster to another of our columns, he made his famous march from Kabul to Kandahar which finally established our control of Afghanistan. Hereafter, for a time, at least, the wise counsels of Lord Lawrence prevailed. It was impossible to extend the frontiers of India indefinitely, and the British withdrew from Afghanistan, relinquishing the Kurram and Khyber Passes in the winter of 1880-1881.

It was well they did so, yet from that day to this the North-West Frontier has been a scene of constant warfare, owing to the existence of a virile and adventurous people who live in the no-man's-land between Afghanistan and British India, and yield allegiance to neither, preferring a dangerous but tax-free life, in which they can crack a head or a joke on either side of the border.

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brought forward against Us, and lead some day to your taking the control of Our affairs out of Our hands." Sher Ali was not far wrong, but his blunt language shocked the Viceroy.

The old argument continues between the advocates of the "Lawrence" and the "Forward" policies: are we to go in and conquer this tribal territory, and if so where do we stop? At Afghanistan? Or on the borders of Russia? Or are we to remain in British India, sending punitive expeditions into the bleak hills of the border? Some future Government of India will have to solve the problem: meanwhile the trans-border Pathans remain—half a million of them, if the tribes combine—marksmen all, and tough as steel, watching for an opportunity to repeat the exploits of their ancestors in the plains of India.

From 1881 onwards there was comparative peace on the frontiers of Hindustan. Lord Ripon, who was Viceroy from 1880 to 1884, instituted many notable reforms, by freeing the press from all restraints except the laws of libel and public decency, improving land legislation, education, local government, and finance.

With regard to finance, it was a year later (1885) that awkward questions first arose regarding the expenditure required by a Western Government drawing its revenue from an Oriental people. We had given India external peace and material progress; but was the price too high? As an Englishman, the present writer is convinced that the benefits were inestimable, and that no balance can be struck between anarchy and security. Nevertheless it is true that our administration, while remarkably cheap, considering the size of the country and the frontiers to be defended, weighs more heavily on the people than native rule.

For example, in 1894 India was remitting to England, for interest on debt, £2,500,000; for interest on railway capital, £5,750,000; for military charges and pensions, £3,300,000; for civil pensions, £1,500,000; for stores supplied, £1,500,000; in addition to paying for the Indian Army and Civil Service. These moneys, amounting to more than £18,000,000 a year, were payable in London in gold, and were raised in India in silver, whose value was depreciating owing to the increased production in silver mines throughout the world, so that the rupee, which was originally worth 2s., fell to 1s. 4d.

The price we asked for our services was more than the

Moghuls would have demanded. But we had given more, much more, both in visible and invisible assets.

At the end of 1895 the rupee "touched rock-bottom" at 1s. 1d.; and thereafter rose, owing to the closing of the Indian mints, but it became a token coin, being exchangeable for 1s. 4d., but in reality worth only 10d. Nevertheless India continued to hoard rupees, as well as gold and jewels, which she put on the wrists and ankles of her women, or buried under millions of mud floors. The annual drain of bullion from West to East was for many years £20,000,000 per annum. Only after the world crisis in finance, in 1931, did the current set in the other direction.

A volume would be required to refute the frequently made assertion that India is heavily taxed. Within the limits of a sentence we may accept Lord Meston's careful calculation<sup>1</sup>—which is indeed endorsed by other economists of equally high authority—that the incidence of taxation of the average inhabitant of India works out at 6s. 7d. a head (\$1.60), and that the average annual income of India, *per capita*, is £7 10s. (\$36.70); so that the percentage levied on the individual income is  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., compared with 20.6 per cent. in the United Kingdom (before the second World War) and 6.7 per cent. in the United States. It is therefore not true that the peasant is being bled to support an alien administration: the peasant, although still shockingly poor, is not so poor as he used to be, and is incomparably more secure in his family and his possessions than in the old days.

With the arrival in India of Lord Curzon, in 1898, we reach the apotheosis of the bureaucracy built up by the British from the framework left them by the Moghuls. In it there were grave defects, common to all bureaucracies. The report writing which the system involved, as Lord Curzon himself wrote, was "at once the most perfect and most pernicious in the world." Yet we are inclined to forget that however tiresome government officials may be, they are preferable to the tax-collectors of bygone days in all countries, who raised the revenue at push of pike, or with pistol in hand.

<sup>1</sup> In an article on "Public Finance," in *Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 1932).

The new Viceroy set himself to cure the evils and to develop the good in our administration, in the attempt to make India in reality what she was already in the imagination of many ardent young Englishmen of that time, the brightest jewel in the Empire's crown.

In 1908 Lords Morley and Minto carried on the good work by inaugurating a series of reforms, which consisted in adding from thirty to fifty members to the Provincial Legislative Councils (according to the size of the Council) in order to give greater popular representation to Indians and to ensure that there should be a non-official majority on such Councils. (The additional members were elected by local authorities, trade associations, and groups of landholders.)

This was the first constructive effort since the Indian Councils Act of 1892 to bring Indian views and controversies directly into the Provincial administrations. The Indian Press, which was already strong and independent, began to take an interest in the doings of the Councils, and the publicity given to them tended to put members on their mettle.<sup>1</sup>

The Central Legislative Council in Calcutta and Simla, however, retained its official majority, unlike the Provincial Councils. Lord Morley took pains to defend this limitation, and indeed declared that "if it could be said that this chapter of reforms led directly or indirectly to the establishment of a Parliamentary system in India, I, for one, would have nothing at all to do with it."

The Provinces were to be autonomous but still under the stern maternal eye of Simla. Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy in 1911, made this clear in a despatch which stated that "it is certain that in the course of time the just demands of Indians for a larger share in the government of the country will have to be satisfied, and the question will be how this devolution of power can be conceded without impairing the supreme authority of the Governor-General in Council. The only possible solution of the difficulty would appear to be gradually to give the Provinces a larger measure of self-

<sup>1</sup> *India, the Road to Self-Government*, by John Coatman (Allen and Unwin, 1941).

government until at last India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all, and possessing power to interfere in cases of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting its function to matters of Imperial concern."

That winter (1911) King George and Queen Mary came East for the Durbar, when Delhi was declared to be the new Imperial capital. Their presence gave rise to astonishing scenes of enthusiasm amongst the people, who came in spontaneously from miles around to see and hear and sometimes literally to worship their rulers. There was nothing servile in the obeisance which sight-seeing peasants made to the vacant Durbar Throne, touching its steps with their foreheads. The King was the Cherisher of the Poor, and his seat a doorstep to the gods above the earth.

Not only to the peasants, and not only to the Hindus was the monarch a symbol of the divine. In after years an Indian officer of my regiment, a Moslem of much influence and force of character, who had become anti-British owing to the supposed wrongs we had inflicted on Turkey, showed me his *tulwar*. "This sword," he said, "will be an heirloom in my family, for it has been touched by a King." The King was George V, at this Durbar.

All India loves a *tamasha*, a spectacle, and the scene on the parade ground at Delhi, when the Princes paid homage, and that at the Fort, when the King-Emperor stood in the famous balcony of Shahjehan, showing himself to the people as the Moghuls did, have rarely been surpassed in pageantry. The memory of Imperial Delhi in 1911 remains, for those who witnessed it, a turning-point in history, the summit of an Imperialism which had much good in it, but was soon to decline with "frantic boast and foolish word."

The partition of Bengal, which this Durbar annulled, led to a wave of political murders in Bengal, and the following year (December 1912) a bomb was thrown at the Viceroy as he was entering Delhi by the famous central street (the Chandni Chowk) on a State elephant, severely wounding him and killing one of his attendants.

A few months previously the Secretary of State for India,

Lord Crewe, had said in the House of Lords: "There was a section in India which looked forward to a measure of self-government approaching to that which had been granted to the Dominions. He saw no future for India on these lines. The experiment of a measure of self-government was one which could not be tried." In a later debate Lord Crewe made his meaning even plainer. So plain that even the bomb-thrower in the Chandni Chowk must have understood. "The maintenance and perpetual continuance of British rule," he declared, "is the best way of securing the happiness of the Indian people."

Never again was this said officially. When the First World War came in 1914, the masses in India were at our side as spontaneously as they had greeted the King and Queen in 1911. A million of her soldiers fought for us overseas, on many battlefields, and their heroism rang through the world.

In 1917 Mr. Edwin Montagu, then Secretary of State, announced that the goal of India's political progress was responsible self-government, to be reached by stages to be reviewed every ten years. The Government of India Act of 1919 (better known as the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms) embodied this principle, and it has remained binding on all future British Governments.

The Act provided India with a new Constitution, by which the Government of the country was divided into two parts: Central and Provincial Subjects. The latter consisted of education, law and order, public works, irrigation, industry; the former of defence, customs, foreign relations, etc. Certain subjects in the Provincial Governments were "reserved" (to the Governor in Council) and others "transferred" (to the popularly elected Ministers), and this divided function was known as "dyarchy": the Governor in Council being responsible to the British Parliament through the Viceroy, and the Ministers to the people through the Legislature.

In November 1920 the first General Elections were held. They were boycotted by the Congress Party,<sup>1</sup> so that none

<sup>1</sup> The Congress Party was started by A. O. Hume, of the Bengal Civil Service (1829-1912), who was a Mutiny veteran and a distinguished ornithologist. Until 1904 Congress was Liberal in tendency. Of late,

but Liberals and Moderates were elected. All went well in that the electors—seven million out of a population of 319 million—chose substantial citizens as legislators (although a sweetmeat-seller in Delhi was elected as a joke), but unfortunately they were not a representative body.

The years 1919 and 1920 were marked by many disturbances (some of them are described in the next chapter) which led to serious bloodshed. In 1923 the Congress Party decided to stand for the Legislatures, but only for the purpose—openly avowed—of “wrecking the Government from within.” Nevertheless much constructive work was done, especially in Madras, where Hindu-Moslem antagonism is slight.

By 1927, under the Viceroyalty of Lord Irwin (now Lord Halifax), India had reached a half-way house on the road to theoretical self-government. An enquiry into the working of the Constitution was due at the end of the first ten-year period, and the Viceroy, who was always trying to placate Mr. Gandhi and induce the Congress Party to co-operate in the task of government, was able to prevail upon the India Office in London to anticipate by two years the Statutory Enquiry due in 1929. So it was that in November 1927 the names of those serving on the famous Simon Commission were published, together with its scope and functions.

If Lord Irwin expected this announcement to be received with gratitude, he must have been disappointed. The news that British Members of Parliament, with no practical knowledge of India, were about to tour the country to enquire whether the people were sufficiently civilised to be admitted to the British Commonwealth aroused no enthusiasm in any quarter, and many protests. Tempers had been exacerbated by the publication of a book by an American lady doctor, which gave horrifying details of the evils of Hinduism,<sup>1</sup> but

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under Mr. Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, it demands complete independence from the British, and a single government for all India. It is the largest political party in the country as regards voting strength.

<sup>1</sup> *Mother India*, by Katherine Mayo (Cape, 1927). Much controversy has raged round this book. The author is unfair to the Hindus as a whole, in that she chiefly describes the worst aspects of Hinduism, such



in any event the Simon Commission was suspect from the start.

The Commission landed in Bombay for a short preliminary visit in February 1928, and was boycotted by the leaders of Indian opinion. Pandit Motilal Nehru and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, both of them influential Brahmins of Allahabad, prepared a report of their own, the Nehru Report, which attempted to solve communal differences. It was a skilful document, written in English which Lord Macaulay could not have bettered, but it gained no general acceptance.

Nor did the masterly Simon Report meet with a happier fate. In Westminster it was disliked by progressive Members of Parliament, because the difficulties of progress in India were described with the greatest clarity and precision. In Delhi it was ignored for the same reason.

Now began the period of Round Table Conferences, at which various formulas were devised and avenues explored leading towards a Constitution. They were held in London in the autumns of 1930, 1931, and 1932, and were marked by the almost fanatical belief that words were as good as deeds which prevailed at the heart of the British Empire at this period. The first Conference was said to "end for ever the old tutelage of India." So far, however, was this from being the truth that seven battalions of troops were moved into Bengal during 1932 to check the recurrent outbreaks of political murder there, while 61,000 allegedly non-violent

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as child marriage and temple vice, without apparently being aware of the happy domestic life of the average Hindu family. Probably the average Englishman or American would be surprised if he knew of the number of cases of prostitution, incest, abortion and unnatural vice which occur in Christian England or in Christian America. But he would try to keep a sense of proportion. He would ask what percentage of the population was involved, knowing that there are ugly blemishes in every civilisation. Perhaps in India the percentage of criminal and vicious persons is high, although statistics do not prove this. It is incontestably true that Hindus have much to reform in their religion; nevertheless we must beware of generalisations from the particular, especially when these are made from a population of hundreds of millions. Miss Mayo's facts may be correct, but the inferences she draws from them are often absurd, and sometimes seem malicious.

non-co-operators were arrested throughout the country during the same year.

During the Conferences one thing became clear amidst all the "gestures" and "declarations," and confusion of clichés about "hammering out structures," "useful spade-work," and "frank exchanges of opinion": the real conflict was not between British and Indians, but between Congress and Moslems, Congress and the Depressed Classes, and Congress and the Indian Princes. Facts are stubborn things, and it proved impossible at the Conferences to blink the fact that there is in India an immense number of people—perhaps as many as 200 million—opposed to the Congress Party.

But before we retrace the twists and turns of fate that led from the Government of India Act of 1935 to the deadlock of 1942, we must pause to view the setting in which these experiments were made.

## CHAPTER IX

### MODERN INDIA

What varied opinions we constantly hear  
Of our rich Oriental possessions.  
What a jumble of notions, distorted and queer,  
Form an Englishman's Indian impressions.  
Hot winds, holy monkeys, tall minarets, rice,  
With crocodiles, ryots and farmers,  
Himalayas, fat babus with paunches and pice  
So airily clad in pyjamas.

*Curry and Rice*, by CAPTAIN G. F. ATKINSON.

THERE are 388,800,000 people in India, according to the 1941 Census. It is twelve times the area of the United Kingdom, and contains more than eight times as many people.

Indians speak a dozen main languages, unintelligible to each other. There are 222 languages spoken by over a million people each. Urdu, the Moghul "camp language," is well known in the north, and English in the south, but there is no language common to the whole country.

In 1931 only 7 per cent. of Indians were literate in any language. In 1941 the percentage was 12 per cent., a striking increase of 19,440,000 people who can read and write, at any rate a little.

Nine-tenths of the people of India are agriculturists, living in 700,000 villages. On an estimate from the as yet incomplete returns of the 1941 Census, Hindus and Jains<sup>1</sup> number between them 274,795,000. Moslems number 88,760,000. Christians number 7,195,000. Sikhs number 4,954,000.

The Hindus worship thousands of gods, and are divided into 2,000 castes or sub-castes.

Early marriage is the rule among the Hindus, who have 2 million married girls under ten years of age, and 100,000

<sup>1</sup> The latter are near-Buddhists, and are so reluctant to take life that they will not kill a mosquito.

widows under that age, who may never remarry if they are strict followers of their caste-customs. However, there is a great and growing body of Hindus who favour the remarriage of widows.

There are some 5 or 6 million wandering ascetics,<sup>1</sup> chiefly Hindus; some 10 million "animists," whose mental stature remains that of the Stone Age; and some 50 million "Depressed Classes"—that is, castes beyond the pale of Hinduism, whose presence is pollution to high-caste Hindus. Until recently these people were not allowed to worship in Hindu temples, and in South India they were expected to leave the road if they met a Brahmin. Even to-day their shadow falling on food renders it uncatable to the orthodox.<sup>1</sup>

There is no sewage system, and no piped water supply, except in a few towns in India. Water is generally carried by *bheesties* in a goatskin, or in brass pots on the heads of the women. Night soil is still removed by hand in the majority of towns; and in the villages everyone uses the fields.

The territory of the Princes, which is governed by themselves, with a minimum of British interference, covers nearly half India, and contains about 85 million people (nearly twice the population of these islands) in 562 States, several about the size of Italy, others only a few square miles in area.

The ten principal cities of India are Calcutta, with 2,109,000 people (there were 10,000 inhabitants in 1700, 200,000 in 1800, and since 1931 the increase—in the last ten years—has been 908,000); Bombay, 1,488,000; Madras,

<sup>1</sup> A high-caste regiment bivouacked near my aeroplane in Mesopotamia during the first World War. At dawn next day I saw each soldier cooking his breakfast separately, within the sacred circle which only his right hand could enter: these men were brave, but their food took so long to prepare that they rarely had time to eat. Some of the Hindus of the Baghdad Legation Guard in 1915 died rather than break their caste by eating food cooked by the Turks, when they were made prisoners of war. I have myself shaken hands (by mistake) when arriving late for a meal with a "twice-born" Rajah, and noticed the admirable courtesy with which he continued his conversation while he left his plate untouched. It was only after his servant had brought him a basin, soap and towel that he was able to continue his meal.

777,000; Hyderabad, 729,000; Lahore, 672,000; Ahmedabad, 590,000; Delhi, 533,000; Cawnpore, 487,000; Amritsar, 391,000; Lucknow, 397,000.

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PERHAPS the most remarkable and significant feature of the Indian scene is the increase in the population, which has mounted vertiginously since 1891. During the last ten years Indians have increased their numbers by 50,681,000, or more than the total population of the British Isles; during the last fifty years the increase has been 174,000,000—that is to say, India added to her already great population (which was 214,000,000 in 1891) more souls than there are in the United Kingdom, Germany and France combined. This is a recent development. Only in the last half-century have babies begun to arrive and survive at such a rate.

In the old days famine took its toll as well as disease. In the Orissa famine of 1866 a million people died, and ten years later more than 5 million died throughout eastern and southern India. No record was kept before the British came of the millions who perished of starvation and plague, but a Dutch merchant, writing of Surat (near Bombay) in 1631, mentions that famine corpses lay “twenty together at the corner of the streets, nobody burying them.” There were hideous disasters in India, even after it was administered by the British, but the British tackled the tasks confronting them as soon as possible, and overcame them before the close of last century.

Nowadays famine relief is organised on a huge scale, and a well-tested machinery is ready to move as soon as the periodic rains (the two monsoons) seem likely to fail. Weekly crop reports keep Government informed of the situation in every part of the country. Every Province has an emergency programme. The collection of revenue is suspended. Test works are started to determine the extent to which relief is required. When the rains eventually break, workers are moved from the large relief works to smaller, near their own villages, so that they can continue with the cultivation of their fields. Loans for the purchase of seeds, cattle and

implements are freely given. Throughout all the period of scarcity the most stringent action is taken by the medical authorities to prevent the outbreak of disease.<sup>1</sup>

In 1918 the monsoon was delayed as long as in the worst famine years on record. Yet only 600,000 people needed relief, instead of the 5 million who were hungry, but not starving, in 1899, and the 5 million who died so pitifully in 1877.

Construction of railways went hand in hand with famine relief and irrigation projects. The twenty-one miles of permanent way laid in 1835 had increased to 4,000 miles in 1868, and to 42,000 miles in 1932, representing a capital of £640,000,000 (\$3,000,000,000). India is the third largest user of socialised railways in the world, carries 623,000,000 passengers a year, employs 800,000 people, and pays an average dividend of 5 per cent.

The irrigated area of India is the largest in the world (ten times the size of that of the United States), more than 40 million acres being watered by 67,000 miles of canals.

Calcutta grew out of a deserted village, where British merchants under Job Charnock established themselves in 1690. Madras began as a few scattered huts, and Bombay was a pestilential swamp, known to seventeenth-century travellers as the "charnel-house." It is now a beautiful and healthy city, with trade to the value of £158,000,000 (\$790,000,000) a year.

These great cities and public works are the result of enterprise, cheap money, and hard work on the part of Indians as well as British; but if we British are to be blamed for our shortcomings it is only just that we should point to the benefits of our rule.

Future ages, while looking with amazement at the lack of decision in our policy from 1919 onwards, will surely regard the years from 1858 to the end of last century as the most memorable in the long history of India, for it was then that the foundations of peace and nationhood were established through the English language and British administration.

<sup>1</sup> See Sir James Mackenna's article in *Modern India* (Oxford University Press, 1932).

The driving force of the machine was—and is—the District Officer, called a Collector in some Provinces and a Deputy Commissioner in others. On these 250 officials, who govern nearly 300,000,000 people (I exclude the Indian States, with their separate administration), the whole smooth functioning of the Government of British India depends.

The District Officer supervises the records of title on which the peasants and farmers hold their land, collects the revenue, remits it if scarcity prevails, watches over some twenty or thirty subordinate magistrates and justices, is responsible for peace and good order, exercises powers as Chief Magistrate in his District (though his decisions are always subject to appeal to a Sessions Judge and to the Provincial High Court), regulates fairs and processions, issues licences, fixes road tolls, manages the estates of minors, conducts elections, and is *ex-officio* chairman of rural boards and municipal councils. The districts he administers are of great size—the average is 3,000 square miles—sometimes as populous as Canada and as large as Yorkshire—and in addition to his office work he is expected to know the headmen of the villages personally, and to tour his area frequently in the cool months between November and March.

In the average up-country station there are as colleagues to the District Officer a Sessions Judge, who is responsible for the higher judicial work, a Superintendent of Police, also probably a Civil Surgeon, perhaps a General, and some Executive Engineers of the Public Works Department. Above the District Officers come the Commissioners, who are in charge of Divisions containing a number of Districts; then the Governor of the Province, then the Viceroy, the Secretary of State for India, and the three Estates of the British Realm. Below them are subordinates of all kinds, from humble attendants who fill ink-bottles, to village headmen, municipal councillors, honorary J.P.'s, and Assistant Magistrates.

In this hierarchy, the District Officer, chosen after rigid examination, and sent out to India at the age of twenty-four as an Assistant Magistrate, known as the "Stunt Sahib," remains the man who makes the wheels go round.

His starting salary is some £350 per annum (\$750), rising to about £2,000 per annum (\$10,000) and more for Commissioners. A Commissionership is the reasonable ambition of an Indian Civil Servant after twenty-five to thirty years' service. Very few are retained after the retiring age of fifty, when I.C.S. men retire on a pension of £1,000 (\$5,000) a year, whatever rank they are holding.<sup>1</sup> The plums of the profession are the Governorships, which are now given to the Indian Civil Service only in the United Provinces, Punjab and North-West Frontier, where long acquaintance with the people is still considered essential to good government; generally speaking the other Governorships go to nominees of the political party in power in London.

Thomas Francis Bignold wrote of the Collector in the palmy days of 1873:

He reigned supreme within his little State,  
His smile shed honour, and his frown was fate.  
Prompt with the rifle, niggard with the pen,  
By manly deeds he won the hearts of men;  
His watchful eye each rival chieftain viewed,  
And oftener calmed than curbed the rising feud.  
He knew the intense devotion that reveres  
Each usage hallowed by a thousand years;  
Nor sought to substitute with ruthless hand  
The alien systems of a distant land.  
Friend of the people, in their midst he moved,  
To all familiar and by all beloved.

But already in those days red tape had begun to enmesh the successors of Clive and Warren Hastings:

For the good Magistrate, our rulers say,  
Decides all night, investigates all day;  
The crack Collector, man of equal might,  
Reports all day, and corresponds all night.

A change had to come. The passing of the old ideas has never been better summarised than by an anonymous District Officer who loved India and served her well for thirty-five years.

<sup>1</sup> Except Governors and Members of the Provincial and Central Executive Councils, who get more.



"If it is true," he writes,<sup>1</sup> "what we have learned ourselves and have taught others, namely that the predominance of race over race is always a tyranny, and that a tyranny is no less a tyranny because it is beneficent; if it is really always demoralising to the rulers, and always lights in the heart of the ruled a flame which may smoulder but which cannot be quenched; if this is true then it is time there was an end.

"We have ourselves made sacrifices in our hour of victory [in 1918] to an idea such as few Empires, even in defeat, have offered to the triumphant victor. To attempt now to regain one of the many diadems which we have thrown away, as an idiot casts away a bauble, seems to me folly, and would be wrong because we believe it to be wrong. I am therefore no advocate at this stage of the world's history of forcing liberated India into a steel frame.

"But a generation ago we did not hold these views, nor had we indoctrinated our subjects with them, except as an academical exercise. We believed that an alien race could govern a subject race justly and wisely, not only because it is immoral to oppress, but because it is bad business. We really believed that in a certain sphere—namely, in the sphere of good government—we had something to teach India, and that that instruction could best be given at first hand. Everybody, both in India and out of it, believed that the European officer was not corrupt, not perfidious, not dangerously liable to caste and race prejudice, loyal to a high code, ready to accept responsibility, possessed of initiative, energetic and determined, not embarrassed by hordes of needy dependents, well-versed in the science of rule.

"At that epoch, whatever the literates might say, the people thought it natural to be governed by Europeans, and their only regret was that there were not more Europeans and fewer Indian officials. They were living too near (both in time and space) to anarchy and misrule not to appreciate the merits of a strong, beneficent, impartial and just government.

<sup>1</sup> *Madampur*, by "Al Carthill" (Blackwoods, 1931).

"This government the villagers personified in the figure of Queen Victoria, for whom there was in the most remote hamlets a superstitious reverence. Her ancestors had, it seems, granted India in fief to the East India Company, whom they supposed to be a person.

"Early in her reign she had resumed that fief, and was now governing it directly as a Crown land. What more natural than that she should govern it through her own kinsmen and clansmen?

"As for there being any need for her to apologise for possessing the sovereignty, such an idea was absurd. What other title has the ruler than the sword? Where better can God anoint His vicegerent than on the field of battle? Hers was the kingdom, and she could do what she willed with it. It was because she willed to do justice and mercy and benevolence, and to that end appointed fitting officers, that her dominion was accepted and confirmed. This, of course, was all very foolish and unenlightened, but it did make things easier for an administrative officer."

"And to that end appointed fitting officers." A bureaucracy such as that which the British brought to a fine pitch of perfection during the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon needed supermen in its service. To some extent they were forthcoming, but only so long as they enjoyed real power. When the Indian Civil Service led to nothing but a glorified clerkship, ambitious young Englishmen began to choose other careers.

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**S**URPRISINGLY, the system still produces good results to-day, although against increasing difficulties, as the powers of the District Officers diminish and those of the Provincial Legislatures increase. During the first two years' government by the Congress Party in the United Provinces riots doubled in number, armed robbery increased by 70 per cent., and murder by 33 per cent.

Nevertheless Indian Ministers are alive to the value of the District Officer: their sometimes bitter speeches against the

British administration do not mean that they are unfriendly to individuals. India is a generous country. There have been many small incidents out of which Indian Ministers might have made immense propaganda capital by publishing the failings of British officials, yet they have refrained through chivalry. In recent years, for instance, a District Officer on a lonely station took to drink, and generally misconducted himself in a manner that would have provided a "story" to cable round the world. The case was hushed up by a prominent Indian Nationalist leader, and the officer at fault was allowed to retire on the pension he had earned by previous good service.

The machinery of Government in the Provincial capitals and at the Centre (which was transferred from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911) has been continually extended and adapted in order to associate Indians more fully with its work. In 1866 the Governors of Provinces consulted a small Council containing a British majority and a few Indian advisers. They (the Governors) were directly under the Viceroy, who in his turn was answerable through the India Office to the British Parliament. In theory the supreme power is still in London, for both Viceroy and Governors can override their Councils and Legislatures; but the Morley-Minto Reforms in 1909, the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, and the Government of India Act of 1935, have increased the representation and the power of Indians in the Provinces and at the Centre, while also progressively "Indianising" the various State Services, such as the Indian Civil, Police, Public Works, Forests, and Education.

Control of India by Westminster is less rigid in practice than in theory, and of late years the Central Legislative Assembly has enjoyed absolute fiscal autonomy as regards tariffs, though not as regards internal expenditure. The Assembly has generally voted against the Army Budget, compelling its "certification" by the Viceroy; but this has been done not because it was desired to abolish the Indian Army (though Mr. Gandhi would have done so cheerfully), but merely as a protest against the powers retained by a so-called alien Government.

Indianisation of the Services has certainly made great strides. In the upper ranks of the administration (the lower are exclusively Indian), such as Commissioners, District Officers, Session Judges, etc., there are only 630 British out of a total of 5,500 officials. Police forces are under the control of Indian Ministers in the Provinces: out of a total of 187,000 only 6,000 are British. In the civil medical departments, out of 6,000 doctors there are fewer than 200 British. In the Forest Service there are 240 British out of a total of 16,000. In the Public Works Department there are 500 British out of a total of 7,500. The 800,000 employees of the Indian State Railways comprise only 3,500 British. Out of 2,500 judges of all grades there are 230 British.<sup>1</sup>

The higher administration of India is not now, and has never been, a task performed solely by the British. It is clear, however, that something entered the administration with the arrival of the British which had previously been absent—something that only Akbar, in Elizabeth's time, and a few early Hindu Kings have been able to inject into the body corporate.

To complete this outline we must glance at the Indian States and the Indian Army. Both of them are factors in the situation which Indians and British can neglect only at their common peril.

The 562 Indian States contain, as we have seen, between them a population of more than 85 million. Each State, whether large or small, is jealous of its rights and privileges, and resents interference, whether by the British or by the Congress Party. In them we may see not only the mirror of past glories, but many good auguries for the future of self-government along traditional Indian lines.

Those who think that Indians are incapable of managing their own affairs—if any such there be—should have met Sir Akbar Hydari of Hyderabad and Sir Mirza Ismail of Mysore, the Prime Ministers of large, prosperous, progressive States. Both these statesmen are now dead, alas! but there are others living whom I might name. He would be a

<sup>1</sup> *A Picture of India*, by Edwin Haward (1942).

singularly blind observer who was not impressed by the mental and physical capacity of the chief men—Maharajas, Diwans, and so on—who are in charge of the leading States. Hyderabad and Mysore have flourishing Universities. Their capitals are town-planned, clean, well-administered, and their Governments, though not democratic, are certainly responsive to the will of the people, as are those of the three other great States, Baroda, Travancore, and Kashmir. Travancore has the highest standard of literacy of any part of India.

There are, of course, bad rulers amongst the Princes, as well as good. When they are bad they are horrid; then the people revolt, and the Paramount Power replaces them; but unless there is widespread discontent or flagrant mismanagement the Indian States are free to conduct their internal affairs as they please.

To the political theorist this state of things may appear unsatisfactory, but to anyone who views the Indian scene with an unprejudiced eye the inhabitants of the States do not seem to be yearning for the blessings of the ballot-box. The Princes' Government is simpler than that of British India, less expensive, more picturesque, and life is gayer. The people prefer a visible autocrat, such as a Rajah with his pomp of elephants and his frequent festivities, when largesse is scattered from the palace balcony, to a painstaking bureaucracy where the unexpected never happens. "Your Government," Sir Rabindranath Tagore told me—and may he rest in peace—"reminds me of a patent American food, guaranteed untouched by hand."

There have been wise Englishmen who regretted that we ever attempted to govern India by our own methods. Sir Walter Lawrence, for instance, who was much loved in India and had great experience of the country, wrote in 1914: "I admire the Indians, and respect their great qualities and believe in their great future. And because I hold that that future is endangered by recent experiments—by concessions which conciliate no one and merely weaken our Government and puzzle and exasperate the people—I venture to suggest another experiment, a new form of

government that would appeal to Indian ideals and would not weaken the British connexion. I would turn the whole of British India into Indian States."

This cannot happen now, but the point should be noted that we never conquered all India. To-day it is possible to travel practically the whole way from Lahore to Cape Cormorin, and from Bombay to Calcutta without leaving States territory.

What of the future? Under self-government for India, in whom will paramountcy vest? In the new Indian Government, or in the Crown? In 1927 this was discussed by a Committee under the chairmanship of the late Sir Harcourt Butler, but no exact definition of paramountcy was made. Yet the issue is inescapable.

Levies from the Indian States composed nearly half the British Indian Army in 1820. During 1857 these troops fought chiefly on our side, and ever since then the Indian State Forces have responded nobly to every call made on them by the British Empire. Indian rulers of every degree sent troops to the first World War (and not only troops, but their nearest kin), and to-day, in our direst need, they have come forward with the same ready help in men, money and materials. Our relations with them touch the honour of every elector in the United Kingdom, for we are bound to them both by ties of friendship and by promises which we cannot repudiate. They would liberate us under certain conditions, but certainly not to deliver themselves bound hand and foot to Congress politicians.

Similarly with the Indian Army. Its native components are rooted in the soil of India (chiefly the soil of the Punjab and the United Provinces), but the tree has been pruned and tended by the British for a hundred years, and would fare ill if left to men who did not understand the martial races. Moreover, there is a branch—namely, 20,000 Gurkhas—which comes from the independent kingdom of Nepal, and will bend to no authority but that of the British.

During the first World War the Indian Army rendered immense services to the Empire, providing in the first four critical months, when we had so little equipment and so few

trained men, no less than twenty-one cavalry regiments, sixty-eight infantry battalions and 204 guns. India's total contribution was 1,302,000 men, 173,000 animals and 3,692,000 tons of supplies and ordnance stores.

It is noteworthy that out of the total number of Indians serving in the last war, 350,000 came from the Punjab. Bengal, with double the population, provided only 7,000 combatants.

Many complaints have been made about the heavy burden imposed on India by military expenditure, which amounts to £41,300,000 (\$201,000,000) per annum—that is, 43 per cent. of the total Central budget; but to consider the Central budget only is misleading, for the Provincial budgets are an integral part of Indian finance: taking the two together reduces the figure to 25 per cent. Even this is a large proportion of the revenue, but it is an insurance which India cannot neglect.

Of late (1922) an Indian "Sandhurst" has been started to train young Indians to military command. It is supported almost entirely by the martial races. Out of the 174 cadets in training at the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun in 1936, practically all came from the north of India. The provinces of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam were hardly represented.

But even supposing they had been, there would be difficult problems ahead. Could a Sikh Colonel, for instance, be sent in aid of civil power to Peshawar? Or to Hyderabad, at the other end of India? What about the Gurkhas? And how would a Moslem Colonel fare in command of Rajputs? Will the Nanyars, for instance, or the Moplahs, be ready in practice to fight in defence of frontiers as far away from them as Vilna is from London? Shall we see Bengalis behind barbed wire in the Khyber Pass and Madrasis garrisoning the forts of the Malakand? How will such problems be solved?

They have been little ventilated, yet the defence of India is obviously a vital part of government.

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ONE raw November morning in 1931, when Mr. Gandhi and I went for a walk in the East End of London, I tackled him on the subject, suggesting that complete Indian independence would mean complete dependence on the martial races, and that therefore one of the martial races would eventually govern the country. Mr. Gandhi shrugged his shoulders.

"You British," he said, "had your racial quarrels on the Scottish border and in Ireland before you settled down."

"Surely the circumstances are different in India?" I replied. "You know, Mr. Gandhi, I have served as an officer in the Indian Army with both Hindus and Moslems, and I know how easily quarrels arise between the two peoples."

"We may have our internal wars," he admitted, "but we shall no longer be enslaved."

"May I put some further questions on the Army?" I asked, "or are you sick of the subject, especially so early in the morning?"

"Of course I am not sick of it," he said; "ask what you like."

"Do you expect the Indian Army to be loyal to the elected Ministers of the Indian people?"

"Certainly I do. The Indian Army is composed of mercenaries, who would serve us as they do you. As to the British soldiers, if Great Britain is serious in her expressed desire to help us over the transitional period, then they also will stay."

"I'm sure I hope so!" I replied. "But many of your countrymen, Mr. Gandhi, are not trained to bear arms. Peoples who cannot bear arms have perished in the past. Do you think the world has progressed beyond that point, and that Soul Force will be enough in the future to maintain a State against internal and external aggression?"

"Certainly I do," he said.

I left it at that, and never alluded to the subject again when I met him in India, well knowing his views on non-violence.



WHEN we returned from our walk I went up to Mr. Gandhi's bedroom, where his mattress and a couple of blankets were laid on the floor. On the floor also was a pile of telegrams, for he was the sole Congress representative at the second Round Table Conference, and an immense responsibility was laid upon his seemingly frail back.

Seemingly frail, but not so in reality. He is all steel and whipcord, even to-day, at the age of seventy-three, with sparkling eye and springy gait: a figure of immense vitality and impish humour. One can say of him that he is a mixture of St. Francis and Lord Beaverbrook.

The thought occurred to me then that the story of modern India could be resumed in the activities of this strange little man. There is no more representative Indian, and he has prepared most of the pies in which John Bull has burned his fingers.

He comes of a clever and prosperous middle-class family in a small Indian State of Western India. At the age of thirteen he was married to a wife about the same age, and he tells us in his autobiography that he began to cohabit with her at that age. Five years later he left his wife and child in his mother's house at Porbandar, on the seacoast of Kathiawar, and sailed for London, where he spent the next four years as a law student. While in England he kept faithfully to the vows he had made to his mother of chastity and abstinence from meat and intoxicating beverages.

He was unhappy, for in London the Indian student learns inevitably what little interest is taken in his country; and even from friends a sensitive Hindu straight from his family circle may hear much that will put his teeth on edge.

On his return to Kathiawar he quarrelled with a British official, and when Mr. Gandhi refused to leave, the official called an attendant and had him put out of the office. He now went to practise law in South Africa. Within a week of his arrival he was assaulted. (One of his own countrymen later knocked him down and broke several ribs: Mr. Gandhi refused to prosecute the man, but the police did.) For twenty years he remained in Natal, defending the rights of Indian settlers and protesting against the taxes levied against

Indians. In spite of insults and injuries which would have turned another man into a bitter opponent of the British, he supported our cause in the first World War. In doing so he exhibited not only strength of character but also an illogicality that should endear him to Englishmen, for here was the Tolstoyan pacifist turned recruiting agent.

Tolstoy's writings had made a deep impression on the young Gandhi, and it is interesting to day to re-read the political views of the great Russian. As a novelist Tolstoy will remain supreme for centuries, but he was never a practical politician. Mr. Gandhi is, and he has been amazingly successful in making Tolstoy's views work. (Views, be it noted, very different from those of the successful revolutionary Lenin.) Probably this would have been impossible in any other land and age. Under the Moghuls Mr. Gandhi would hardly have escaped the punishment which we have seen Jehangir inflicted on his rebellious subjects.

Neither Lord Reading nor Lord Irwin, however, was prepared to sew Mr. Gandhi into the skin of an ass. Their arguments failed to convince; yet their methods were better than the Moghuls'.

From 1919 to the present day Mr. Gandhi has led the agitation against British Imperialism. It was the Rowlatt Acts which first brought him to the forefront of the Indian stage. The Acts were passed to deal with revolutionary disorders and terrorism; they involved arrest without trial and other restrictive measures in areas where political murders had been committed, but were never, in fact, put into operation. However, extraordinary stories about those Acts were circulated throughout India, such as that all processions would become unlawful assemblies.

Mr. Gandhi led a campaign of civil disobedience, combined with non-violence, as a protest against these cruel regulations of a "satanic Government," with the result that the masses accepted the first half of his creed and neglected the other: there was much non-co-operation throughout India, but little non-violence. He was entirely honest in his belief in soul-force, and frequently suffered acute remorse at the disturbing and indeed dreadful results of his preaching:

nevertheless he continued to preach. Nothing deterred him for long.

The Amritsar story is a sad one for an Englishman to write, but it cannot be passed over in silence, for we were partly at fault, and partly the victim of evil forces in the background. Behind the saintly Mahatma we can discern the sinister figures of revolutionaries who were using him for their own purposes: there was a campaign of murder in Bengal, and a threat from Afghanistan, where Amanulla Khan had had the previous Amir murdered (February 1919) and had proclaimed a Holy War against the British, influenced by rumours that the whole Punjab had risen.

On April 13th, 1919, on the day General Dyer fired upon the crowd at Amritsar, a durbar was held in Kabul, at which the upstart Amir made an inflammatory speech. His troops attacked a few days later, and were heavily defeated. Unfortunately the tribal levies on the British side of the border mutinied, killing many of their officers.

Such was the situation confronting the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, when he ordered General Dyer, on April 9th, to take a force of troops to Amritsar, where serious disturbances were feared. Rioting broke out before the troops arrived. On April 10th a mob attempted to reach the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow to protest against some arrests. They were fired upon, and retreated, whereupon they murdered all the Europeans they could find in the city.

Two British banks were attacked and looted, and the three British managers in them at the time were killed, their bodies being burned. A British railway official was killed at Amritsar Station; and it was set on fire, as also the Anglican Church, Mission School, Central Telegraph Office and Town Hall. Two British women were attacked. One was a missionary, who was terribly beaten and left for dead in the street, but was later rescued and cared for by some Indian friends.

Dangerous mobs collected in Lahore city. A Sikh ex-soldier announced that there had been a mutiny of troops in the Punjab, and that 500 British had been killed, he himself

having accounted for six. (This was pure invention.) Railway and telegraph lines were cut. Throughout the Punjab there were burnings and lootings. Evidently there were revolutionaries at large supplementing Mr. Gandhi's soul-force with some very skilful sabotage.

On the morning of April 13th General Dyer marched through Amritsar city at the head of a small body of troops, reading aloud at various points an order forbidding any public meetings; a gathering of more than four persons would be considered an unlawful assembly and dispersed by force.

In despite of this proclamation a large crowd gathered in Jallianwala Bagh at 4 p.m. that afternoon (it was a market day) to hear addresses by various Congress leaders.

General Dyer at once marched to the scene of the assembly with fifty riflemen and two armoured cars with machine guns. The cars and guns he could not bring to bear on the crowd, for the entrance to the position he had chosen was too narrow. His fifty riflemen took up their stations, with loaded magazines. As soon as they were ready, he ordered them to open rapid fire upon the five or six thousand people before him.

General Dyer said at the subsequent enquiry that any hesitation on his part might have induced an attack on the small force at his disposal. It is to be remembered that five Europeans had been murdered three days previously, and that the smoke of the riots still hung over the city. He fired 1,650 rounds into the crowd in the space of about ten minutes, and then marched his men back to their quarters, leaving the dead and wounded as they lay.

About 400 people were killed and 1,600 wounded. General Dyer has been hotly assailed, and as hotly defended. It is said by some that he saved the Punjab, and it is true that the news of his severity spread like wild-fire through the country, and probably averted the need for other repressive measures. Others maintain that it was a shocking action for a British General to have fired for so long upon such a large unarmed crowd.

Most of his critics (and supporters) have no experience of the April sun in the Punjab, or of commanding fifty men

amidst 300,000 people seething with revolt. Instant action was unquestionably necessary. But Dyer should have fired fewer rounds, in my humble opinion, and should have made full provision for the wounded.

To return to Mr. Gandhi. He declared that he made a "Himalayan blunder" in trusting to the soul-force of his followers; and in December of this year (1919) he welcomed the Royal Proclamation which gave its assent to the Government of India Act. "The Proclamation," he wrote, "gives one an insight into the true British character. As the Proclamation shows it at its best, General Dyer's inhumanity shows it at its worst." Soon, however, he was able to re-persuade himself that civil disobedience could be carried out with non-violence. In August 1921 the Moplahs of South India thought that the day of Indian independence had dawned. To mark the occasion they murdered hundreds of Hindus and forcibly circumcised thousands more, which again disillusioned Mr. Gandhi, and induced him to undergo a penitential fast; yet we find him writing of the visit of the Prince of Wales to India (afterwards Edward VIII) in November 1921, that it was "an unbearable provocation to the people, who do not want to see the representative of a system of which they are sick to death."

In December he prepared another campaign of mass civil disobedience, and early in 1922 he wrote to the Viceroy announcing that this would begin in a week's time unless all the Congress demands were accepted. About this time a mob of rioters attacked the village of Chari Chaura in the United Provinces, and burned alive twenty-one policemen and watchmen. Again Mr. Gandhi repented for his followers. Soon afterwards he was arrested and tried for sedition. He admitted all the charges, and begged the judge to give him a severe sentence. The wish was granted, for in March 1922 he went to prison for six years; but he was unconditionally released two years later, after an operation for appendicitis.

At the time of the Simon Commission (1927) he became the mediator between the ardent spirits of the Congress Party, such as Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who wanted complete independence, and those led by the elder Nehru, Pandit

Motilal, who was satisfied with Dominion Status, at least as a preliminary. It was decided—by Congress—that the policy of non-co-operation would be revived unless the British Government had given India the status of a Dominion by 1929.

During that year Mr. Gandhi presented his terms of peace to Lord Irwin, the then Viceroy: that there should be a Conference in London at which plans should be drafted for immediate Dominion Status; meanwhile that there should be a total prohibition of intoxicating liquors in India, that army expenditure should be halved, and drastic cuts made in the salaries of the Indian Civil Service. When these demands were rejected Mr. Gandhi again declared for non-violent non-co-operation, with the usual results.

In December 1927 an attempt was made to wreck the train in which Lord and Lady Irwin were travelling to Delhi. After debating the matter for an hour and a half, Congress passed a resolution, by 935 votes to 837, congratulating "the Viceroy and Lady Irwin and their party, including the poor servants, on their fortunate narrow escape."

In May 1930 Mr. Gandhi was again imprisoned, and again released, in January 1931. In September he arrived in London as the sole Congress representative at the second Round Table Conference, where he found himself quite unable to reconcile the varying views of the other members, who did not belong to the Congress Party. A verbatim report of the discussions between him and the Aga Khan would be a fascinating document, but in its absence we must conclude that if two such shrewd and patriotic Indians could not agree, the masses are unlikely to be more accommodating.

The Mahatma returned to India profoundly dissatisfied, for the atmosphere of London had been uncongenial. He announced his intention of restarting non-violent non-co-operation (the very words will sicken future chroniclers of this time), and in January 1932 Lord Willingdon, who had replaced Lord Irwin as Viceroy, detained him in Yeravda Jail, Poona.

Thereafter we do not hear so much of Mr. Gandhi, but

the work of Constitutional reform proceeded steadily without his help.

In 1933 a White Paper on India was published by order of Parliament, foreshadowing the reforms inaugurated under the Government of India Act of 1935. The Congress Party passed more and more under the control of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru; and Mr. Gandhi, as soon as he was again freed, retired to a village in the Central Provinces, where he devoted himself to the laudable tasks of improving rural life and raising the status of his outcaste Hindu brethren.

Nevertheless the little figure of Mr. Gandhi, with his loin-cloth and toothless smile, does not pass out of the picture. Up to the second World War, and indeed at the time of Sir Stafford Cripps' visit to Delhi, he remained the dominant figure in Indian politics. His supremacy is due to the fact that he is typical of the Hindu peasant, raised to the *nth* degree of intellect, but shrewd, simple, stubborn, a very child of the Motherland. He is a Mahatma, a great spirit, but so far he has been unable to achieve the miracle of bringing the Hindus and Moslems together.

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THE Government of India Act, 1935, was an attempt to placate the extremists while not antagonising the Princes. That it satisfied nobody was inevitable.

The Act was an honest attempt to solve the insoluble, but its drafters might have remembered that the best minds in India were not and had never been enamoured of parliamentary government. They wanted—and want—their own system of government, whatever that may prove to be. Twenty years earlier a brilliant Bengali, Chitta Ranjan Das, had stated the matter as plainly as Lord Morley, though with very different emphasis: “If to-day,” he said, “the British Parliament were to grant provincial autonomy with responsibility in the Central Government, I for one would protest against it, because it would lead inevitably to the concentration of power in the hands of the middle class. We ask that you do not school us in a highly centralised form

of parliamentary rule. This would break down when you left us, for it is against the economic, social and religious nature of India."<sup>1</sup>

The plan under the 1935 Act was to approach an All-Indian Federation in two stages. First, to set up autonomous Provincial Governments in eleven Provinces. Second, to federate these with the Indian States. "Safeguards" were introduced at every stage of the process. Governors of Provinces were to have power to override their Ministers in matters of law and order, or to look after minorities. Similarly the Viceroy was to have power to certify bills which the Central Legislatures had refused to pass.

Universal disappointment was felt in India, for the reasons already given; and from that date to the moment of writing (May, 1942) it is unfortunately true to say that the situation has deteriorated.

Long negotiations with the Indian States did not succeed in securing their endorsement of an All-India Federation, and in 1939 they declared the scheme was "fundamentally unsound."

In September 1939 the Congress Party condemned Fascist and Nazi aggression, and Mr. Gandhi said that his sympathies were "wholly with the Allies," and that "the defeat of Britain would be a calamity"; nevertheless, only a month later the Congress Working Committee called on Indian Ministers to resign their positions, because "the Party cannot possibly give any support to Great Britain, for this would amount to an endorsement of the Imperialist policy which it has always sought to end."

In March 1940 Congress further declared that "it strongly disapproves of Indian troops being made to fight for Great Britain. Neither recruiting nor money raised in India can be regarded as voluntary contributions from India. Congress declares again that nothing short of complete independence can be accepted."

Four days later the Moslem League gave its views about complete independence. It stated that an All-India Federa-

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Sir Evan Cotton in an article in *Political India* (Oxford University Press, 1932).



tion was completely unacceptable, and officially adopted the "Pakistan plan" of two Indias, declaring that no Constitutional plan would be workable, or acceptable to Moslems unless it were designed on the principle that areas in which Moslems were in a majority, such as the North-Western and North-Eastern zones, should be grouped into independent States.

During this month (March 1940) the Chamber of Princes also passed a resolution recording its fixed and final view, that any future Constitution should contain "essential guarantees and safeguards for the preservation of the sovereignty and autonomy of the States and the protection of their rights."

In February 1941 the Moslem League Working Committee stated that "the League views with disapproval recent pronouncements which give the impression that His Majesty's Government still contemplate a Constitution based on the economic and political unity of India; reaffirms the Pakistan policy; and condemns the Congress civil disobedience campaign, which clearly aims at coercing the British Government to accept the Congress demands."

In view of all these frankly divergent declarations, what hope was there for Sir Stafford Cripps' mission? And what justification for the newspaper reports from Delhi that "first reactions to the British proposals recognise that the War Cabinet have devised *a brilliantly worked out scheme for harmonising the complexities of the Indian problem*, and have definitely cleared the way for the establishment of a fully self-governing India"?

Far from definitely clearing the way to All-India Government, the War Cabinet's Draft Declaration made it clear that the proposed Constitution would allow any Province in British India to vote itself out of the Union and retain its independence. This the Hindus would not accept; while the Moslems would accept nothing that did not give them sovereign rights in the Punjab, Sind, the North-West Frontier, and Bengal.

On April 3rd, 1942, the Congress Party formally rejected the Cripps proposals on three main grounds: (1) Refusal

to transfer the Defence portfolio to Indian hands; (2) the impairment of national unity by allowing a Province the right to secede from the Indian Union; (3) the suggested representation of Indian States in the Constituent Assembly by "palace nominees" (*i.e.*, persons chosen by the Indian rulers instead of by popularly elected representatives).

The Moslems, the Sikhs, the Depressed Classes and the Orthodox Hindu Party (the Mahasabha) all rejected the proposals. Only the Liberal Federation (composed of distinguished Indians, but with negligible popular support) issued a statement welcoming the scheme on the whole, but pointing out that "the creation of more than one Federal Union, each having its separate army, might result, in certain conceivable circumstances, in conflict between them."

That is the position: deadlock between, say, 180 million Congress followers, 80 million believers in Pakistan, 80 million States' subjects, and 50 million Depressed Classes.

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**I**NDIA is of vital concern to us, not only materially, but because she has been the scene of a splendid adventure in our history which we must bring to a successful conclusion.

Chiefly by bold adventure and by fair dealing, but partly also by force, we found ourselves in the extraordinary position, in the eighteenth century, of governing an Empire almost against our will. In 1858 we became absolute autocrats of this vast domain.

The British record is not free from faults: black blots viewed close, but blemishes only—which I have not disguised, have indeed perhaps over-emphasised—against the background of progress which these pages have attempted to describe. Our task must be completed. Our venture was high and our achievements great: now we have it in our power to give the tale a happy ending, and to begin a new and greater story.

## CHAPTER X

### LOOKING FORWARD

WE have seen how for more than a century there have been Englishmen in authority—even the much-abused Macaulay—who anticipated and desired that India should attain complete independence; and others who, speaking for the British Cabinet as lately as 1912, saw “no future” even for self-government under Dominion Status.

To-day, such divisions of opinion are completely out of date. The desire and intention of Parliament and people of Great Britain is to give complete independence to Indians in so far as Indians themselves can organise and give reality to such independence. To *Indians*, not necessarily to All-India as a whole, because the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps has made it abundantly clear to the world, as it has long been clear to those with first-hand knowledge of the country, that the real problem is not whether we should or should not give freedom to India, but *who is to exercise power, where, and over whom?*

Only malice or ignorance can now accuse the British of the policy of “divide and rule.” It would have been entirely beyond the power of a few thousand British officials, living amongst 300 million Indians, to have kept the Hindus and Muhammadans apart if there had been a common meeting-ground between the two. One day, no doubt, the old animosities will disappear. So also in some future which seems likely to be distant Protestant Ulster and Catholic Eire will reconcile their differences, but it would be rash to assume that such ancient conflicts can be settled by the visit of a lawyer, whether to Ireland or to India. What the visit of Sir Stafford Cripps did—and it is much, for, alas! the East has reason for not trusting British politicians as it trusts

British merchants<sup>1</sup>—was to establish our firm intention to give India the maximum possible independence in the minimum possible time.

Twenty years ago good King George V might perhaps have become another Asoka or Chandragupta to his Hindu subjects, and a Caliph Omar or a Suleiman the Magnificent to the Moslems, but there was no Disraeli then to advise the Crown to take bold and imaginative action, and in these days of turmoil, under the pressure of crowding events, the opportunity cannot recur to good King George VI. Independence is not now a boon to be conferred, or a prize for diligent pupils of Western democratic institutions. If we think it is, we are living in a world of fantasy, as Mr. Nehru frankly tells us. (Yet Mr. Nehru himself is not free from dangerous delusions of Congress power.)

Independence has for so long been dangled before Indian eyes that they—of all people, considering their philosophy—no longer recognise the illusions inherent in that dangerous word, and are determined to seize it as if it were a ripe peach. Only brute force could prevent them doing so, and far from the British exercising such force, they are urging them to gather the fruit as if it were really there for the taking.

Unfortunately, Indians do not all want the same independence. Those who love India and believe that she will hold a high place in the civilisation of the future must be prepared to face the real issues, which we have not yet done. High-sounding phrases about freedom will get us nowhere. The questions to which we must address ourselves are:

1. *Can the Indians build one independent Indian Empire?*
2. *If not, are we (the British people) to support the formation of two or more self-governing Indias?*
3. *Could such units be formed with justice to minorities, and could they be governed in tranquillity?*

<sup>1</sup> "Political" is a slang term in North India for a crooked deal, yet nothing has shaken the belief of the bazaars that British goods are of sound material, and that British firms are honest.

4. *Will the Indian Princes consent to such a plan?*
5. *What will be the place of the British Crown, the British Army, and of British trade in the India of the future?*

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THE population of India, as we have seen, is 388,800,000, out of which total 88,750,000 are Moslems and 274,750,000 are Hindus. It is obvious that a democratic All-India Government would be predominantly a Hindu Government, and that it would be controlled, as the Congress Party is now controlled, by the Congress Working Committee. What would be the position of Moslems in—or under—such a Government?

There is an idea in this country that Moslems have only recently asked themselves this question, but the truth is that it was formulated not only since 1907, when the Moslem League was formed, but at least since “the Empire swayed like a storm-bent oak” at the time of the Sepoy Mutiny. (It is not true, by the way, that Hindu and Moslem mutineers co-operated against us often or cordially in the Mutiny. Exceptionally they did so, in the heat and excitement of May and June 1857, but afterwards it was the constant quarrelling and continuous mistrust between them which enabled the oak to stand.) And it is not only the Moslem minority (if a group twice as large as the population of the British Isles can be called a minority) which has been speculating on its future if the British power were removed. The Hindu fighting races have long discussed the same question, and more recently the Hindu Depressed Classes.

Old Sir Pertab Singh’s prediction that if the British left India there would not be a rupee or a virgin left in Bengal may have been a joke, but it is what many of the yeomen and peasants of the Punjab and North-West Frontier believe. The point needs emphasising, for it is little understood in the English-speaking world, whose rupees and virgins are still so comparatively secure.

For twenty years I was in close touch with martial Indians,

and I know (better than many educated Indians)<sup>1</sup> how they despise and dislike the "intelligentsia" of their own country. There is a mounting nausea amongst them with regard to the kind of democracy we have established in India, though they themselves would claim to be democrats in the sense that they believe in the brotherhood of man. To such people, with their traditions of farming and fighting, who like and understand the young British official who lives amongst them as a soldier or as an administrator, our transplanted Westminster in the Provincial capitals, swarming with lawyers and money-lenders, are ugly and alien places, more corrupt and tyrannical than the court of any despot. They understand the ways of a despot, who is generally accessible, even if unjust, but the Parliamentary system the British have given to India as a precious boon seems to them a gigantic bore, an inhuman insanity.

I should be sorry to go on record as myself agreeing with this view. There is a bad type of politician in India, as everywhere else, and our northern democracy suits India no better than it suited Italy or Spain or Portugal; but amongst the chief political leaders are men of great intellect and nobility of character. To name them would be invidious, but who could accuse Mr. Gandhi, for instance, of self-seeking or dishonesty? There are many other leaders whom I know personally and whom I would rank as men of integrity and distinction in any company. Given the opportunity—that is the crux—such men may achieve great things, not for India only, but for the advancement of the intellectual heritage of all mankind.

As we have seen, there have been three or four periods of prosperous Hindu rule in All-India, more than a thousand years ago, but none of them lasted long. Historically, there is no more reason to assume that Hindus are the rightful rulers of India than there is to say that England belongs to the Normans. Indeed, the only rulers who ever looked like

<sup>1</sup> I must enter a protest against the idea that only the Indian-born know India. Many Indians of high attainments know next to nothing of the people in other Provinces, for in addition to the formidable barriers of caste there are those of tongue and temperament.

establishing permanent sovereignty (and might have done so had railways been invented then) were those of the House of Timur, and no one suggests restoring the Great Moghuls.

I believe the British administration has been the most beneficent of any, but it has no appearance of popularity or permanency after a clear run of only eighty-five years since the Sepoy Mutiny. As to the Congress Party, it could not give the country eighty-five days, or eighty-five hours of stable government, for it would be repudiated by "minorities" of a total that would fill all Western Europe.

The Hindus, then, are attempting the impossible in trying to build a single unit of Government for All-India, and we who wish to see India develop along her own lines are wasting our time in supporting them. Let us therefore explore the possibilities of reconciling with reasonable Hindu aspirations what the Moslems want, and what they have good cause to demand: independence in the North-West and North-East of India.

Let us put ourselves in Moslem slippers. We British would consider ourselves aggrieved if some world-improving superman or super-Government were to decree that we should be ruled by an All-Europe Government (no doubt with "safeguards") with Teutons as the dominant race—or Slavs, if you prefer—because we were a minority in Europe. Even if this super-Government consisted of supermen of infinite strength and wisdom, we should submit to it only just so long as we had not the strength to throw off the shackles. And if the supermen showed signs of doubting their own decisions, yet continued to asseverate before the world that they had offered freedom to All-Europe, and that it was now incumbent on us to find a solution to the difficulty, we should reply, as the Moslem League has, that such freedom was a farce.

The problem of Pakistan is not, of course, as simple as in the above analogy. There are no homogeneous areas in India such as there are in Europe. In the Punjab, which would be the centre of Pakistan, there are roughly<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Figures of the 1941 Census are not available at the time of writing (May, 1942), so I have added the percentage increase (15 per cent.) for All-India to the 1931 figures for the Punjab.

15,200,000 Moslems, 7,200,000 Hindus and 3,500,000 Sikhs. There is therefore a very real Moslem majority in this Province, but it is not reasonable that the millions of Hindus should be without safeguards, or that the Sikhs, belonging to a nation (more accurately a religion) that has fought with us loyally on a hundred battlefields, and that has the bitterest memories of Moslem oppression in the time of Aurungzeb, should be subjected to a rule that would be far harder for it to bear than the British. It would be difficult to deny the Sikhs a right to secede from Pakistan. If Moslems ruled in Lahore, Sikhs should rule in Amritsar.

Yet Lahore was also a Sikh capital in the days of the "Lion of the Punjab." To prepare a workable scheme of self-government for areas such as exist in North India, where so many races have contended for mastery, and so few have intermarried, is a task of the greatest difficulty. I shall not enter into details which are far beyond the scope of this book. When one knows the Punjab well, and thinks of the Sikh villages planted in a Moslem countryside, and of Moslem villages amidst a Sikh or Hindu population, and of all the mixed villages, one realises that reforms are only easy to the theorists, and that plans which look well in the study, on small-scale maps, are full of difficulties when seen in the fresh air.

Nevertheless, what alternative is there to Pakistan? I see none. The obstacles can be overcome. Hitherto they have hardly been tackled, for the Congress Party has concentrated its energies on something impracticable, trying to secure all power for itself, and exploring avenues to the Golden Age of Asoka. Once there is a desire to achieve the possible, instead of an attempt to realise the impossible, a workable scheme of self-government can be formulated. It will not be easy, even then, but it may be done for two good reasons:

(a) The Indians and the British have a deep-seated liking for each other, in spite of all their quarrels.

(b) The peoples have need of each other. The British need Indian trade, and India needs British protection.

What is to be feared is that the British will shirk uncomfortable decisions, as they did for so long in Palestine, and



act only after they are compelled by murder and increasing anarchy to come to a hurried compromise, which pleases neither their own conscience nor the hopes of opposing factions.

What is to be hoped, however, is that miracles will occur; that the British and their Aryan brothers will be true to their best traditions and that the Hindus (as now seems possible) will consent to some form of Pakistan. Then indeed the will-of-the-wisp of freedom, so far pursued through a marsh of loose thinking, will become that maiden we all desire, a living liberty, amenable to love and reason.

The task before Indians, in that happy event, would be to evolve a practicable scheme for dividing India into several sovereign States, such as Egypt and Iraq, each with treaty relations with each other and with the British, who (for reasons given below) would have to keep a permanent force in India.

The Indian Princes could not be neglected, of course, for reasons I need not repeat. If they desired to do so, they should be assisted to form a single though geographically disjunct entity, in direct relation with the British Crown.

The Cabinet Declaration of 1942—now withdrawn—went far towards meeting the Moslem demands, but not far enough for the Moslems and too far for the Hindus. No declaration and no scheme can satisfy everybody. The tangle in India must be cut in one or two places before it can be unravelled; and it is to the interest of all concerned, including of course the British, that the cutting should be done quickly, and the unravelment begin now.

Time is important, but the details of the scheme cannot be settled in a hurry. The complexity of the problems involved can hardly be apparent to the reader unacquainted with Indian life. He should picture to himself a land where a charwoman would permanently defile the family for which she worked if she washed a plate or drank a cup of tea on the premises; a land where three-quarters of the inhabitants thought the other quarter barbarians, and the "barbarians" considered the majority idolaters; and a land which has never known three centuries of stability or unified rule. Are

these exaggerated statements? Is caste being broken down, and are religious differences disappearing? Perhaps, but it is a slow process in a vast country, and the difficulties would not vanish if the British went. They would increase. Indians who read these lines may think that since the writer is an Englishman he cannot be unprejudiced. I claim I can. If I were able to unwind the roll of history and plan its events differently, I should send Clive to New York instead of to Calcutta, and I should allow the Honourable East India Company to go bankrupt before the days of the Boston Tea Party. I am not at all sure that my country has benefited, when everything is considered, by the attempt to hold the gorgeous East in fee. There has been a drain of more than gold from West to East; there has been a vast expenditure of energy which might have been better directed towards countries where there was less immediate profit but greater possibilities for the British to live and breed on the land.

This, of course, is a matter of personal opinion, not of fact, like the pledges the British have given to the Princes, or the determination of the Moslems not to be ruled by the Hindus. But whatever we may think of the past, it is surely beyond argument that in the present the British race has its hands full. We want the trade of India, if we can get it fairly, but a minimum of other responsibilities.

Can Indians by agreement between themselves defend their peninsula, give justice to minorities, and keep the peace within their borders? Alas! history gives only one answer: there can be no peace without a paramount power. Would the Indians prefer the Russians or the Japanese? I think not. I think they would prefer the British, and if they were there not as rulers, or even advisers, but as guardians of security and wardens of the marches, I think they would be accepted as honoured guests.

At the moment, the position is that unless and until Hindus and Muhammadans can agree between themselves, there can be no independent India, and that whatever agreement is arrived at, some outside power will be necessary, for a long time to come, as an insurance against internal or external aggressors.

To formulate a detailed scheme for the future nations of India would be beyond the scope of a much larger book than this. The Pakistan plan as propounded by the Moslem League is faced with practical difficulties. The same is true of any plan for making an enclave round Amritsar, in which the Sikhs might enjoy independence. As to the Princes, to maintain their present rule amidst two or three independent nations will not be easy. And it will be a matter of even greater complexity as to how the British would fit into the picture. Yet at the risk of being tedious I must point out that the difficulties can be overcome, given goodwill, and must be overcome because the sun will not stay in his course over the flagstaff of Viceroy's House.

The broad lines of the only arrangement which seems possible are that Indians should group themselves under the following national allegiances:

- (a) Hindustan, with its capital in Delhi.
- (b) Pakistan, with its capital in Lahore.
- (c) Rajasthan, the India of the Princes who did not desire to federate with (a) or (b), with headquarters in Delhi, and capitals in the present Indian States.
- (d) And possibly, if the Sikhs refuse to enter a predominantly Moslem Pakistan, the Khalsa State, with headquarters at Amritsar. But how the Sikhs would be able to look after the scattered members of their community in Hindustan and Pakistan I do not know, unless they were prepared to carry out large-scale transferences of population.

Nothing would be easier than to find objections to such a plan. Obviously a single Government for All-India would be cheaper and simpler. Allocation of revenue for common defence, the working of postal, telegraph, and railway systems amongst the various nations, the transference of the debt service from one body to three or four, and the settlement of tariffs and port dues by mutual agreement would be difficult and delicate matters for settlement by the new nations in India. Under unitary government they would hardly arise. But the peoples of India, like the peoples of the rest of the world, prefer nationhood to unitary government. To achieve it, the interested parties will have to come

together determined to reach a satisfactory conclusion. Once the will exists, a way will be found.

Mr. Gandhi has recently suggested in his airy way that the country can be left to her own devices, and that after some internal conflict "the strongest side will win," and then India will live happily ever after. It is not true. Mr. Gandhi would never have said such a thing if he had studied the history of his own people.

Egypt and Iraq should be our examples. They are both independent kingdoms, yet have agreed, as the British have agreed in the case of the West Indies and other outposts of the United States, to lease certain territory to foreigners in order to safeguard their security. We do not feel that we have lost our freedom because of the bases we have given to the Americans. Nor should Indians feel humiliated if we tell them that in the world as it exists to-day the Indian peninsula must be safeguarded by the British. It is the truth, after all. India to-day has neither the cohesion nor the industrial resources to defend herself against a well-armed State, and it is obvious that sudden removal of the British army would create a vacuum to be filled by another army.

In the realism of the post-war world this will be admitted, I hope and believe. The British have no need to apologise for their presence in India. They are fulfilling a necessary function, and will continue to do so, while handing over to those who live in the country the control of their own internal affairs, and indeed external affairs, provided they do not conflict with the safety of India as a whole.

The Security Force to be kept by the British in India should be of a size sufficient only to fight a delaying action in the event of invasion, and to dissuade any attempts by the component nations to extent their boundaries by force. Air power and mechanisation have of course greatly extended the range and increased the effectiveness of armies, so that a more limited number of cantonments than are at present occupied would be sufficient to accommodate the three or four British divisions required.

Two of these divisions would probably still be necessary on the North-West Frontier, and might occupy the Quetta-

Peshawar-Rawalpindi triangle, with hill stations for the summer as at present. It would probably also be necessary to have a zone at Karachi like the Suez Canal zone in Egypt, to secure a sea base whereby the British Indus army would be reinforced in case of need, and probably another enclave in South India, at Cochin, which is a harbour of great and growing importance.

To keep British forces in the interior of India, or even in the great seaports of Bombay and Calcutta, seems to me unnecessary.

In the event of trouble between Hindus and Moslems it would be a factor of safety that Karachi would be in Moslem hands, while the other ports would be administered by Hindus. Hindustan and Pakistan would each have armies of their own, equipped and trained by the British, if they so desired, but not otherwise. Headquarters for the Security Force might be in the big military cantonment of Rawalpindi, or in the pleasanter city of Peshawar, but important military missions would also necessarily be maintained at Delhi and Lahore, to establish liaison with the Hindustani and Pakistani armies. Some share of the British military expenditure in India would obviously be borne by the nations of India; but I cannot attempt to examine the finance or the strategy of the Security Force in any detail.

Diplomatic representation would be established by two Embassies in Delhi (one for Hindustan and one for Rajasthan), and another at Lahore for Pakistan, with perhaps a Legation at Amritsar.

There would, of course, be no question of these diplomats performing the advisory functions of the present Foreign and Political Department in the Government of India, whose agents give valuable but sometimes unwanted advice to the Princes. They would be Ambassadors, with perhaps guards for defence of their Embassies during the sudden outbreaks of rioting liable to occur in India, but with no power of intervention by means of the Security Force. The Force could only be used, as in the case of Egypt and Iraq, either by a declaration of war, or by an Order in Council, which is always subject to the endorsement of the British Parliament.

The nations of India would thus be not absolutely independent, but as independent as most peoples are in this imperfect world.

India is not Europe, though she is as big as Europe without Russia. Europe can maintain peace for fairly long periods—though no one would claim it had ever been a concinnous continent—because it contains large homogeneous areas and boundaries that have become established by custom or by geographical features. Nothing of the sort exists in India, which is a sub-continent ringed by mountains to the north, making an arena for races and religions which have never blended, and which have never enjoyed the protection of internal barriers, so that they have continued fragmented throughout recorded time, generally waging bitter struggles for supremacy. The British have made progress possible by providing the necessary barriers, built partly out of the bayonets of trained soldiers, and partly out of the prestige of decent administration.

The barriers must remain, but British soldiers are no longer necessary to maintain them, except in the background. In such a scheme the English reader may feel that there is a small place for what has hitherto been the paramount power. On the other hand, Indian readers may see in my outline another attempt to clothe the British wolf in the woolly fleece of a mandate. I am not, however, bringing forward any set proposals, but merely outlining the shape which they must assume under existing conditions if they are to have any chance of acceptance.

Indians, in short, cannot be masters of the peninsula, but they can be masters in their own houses, large houses, holding many millions, and much more manageable and homogeneous than the present unwieldy and unwilling Indian Empire.

Whatever grouping is adopted, whatever shape the India of the future assumes, there will remain sections of the population under alien rule, and difficult adjustments to be made. The only question is, who shall make them? Should Indians tackle these problems themselves, under some scheme which gives them powers of choice and decision in

defined areas, or should the British continue to sit enthroned amidst the splendours of New Delhi, surveying an empire which will gradually become as unreal as that which we wrested from the hands of the last of the Great Moghuls?

We British have a difficult problem to solve in India, demanding clear-cut decisions; but neither our idealism nor our practical capacity has disappeared.

We must have faith in ourselves. Faith, and, as electors, at least some knowledge of the past and present in India. Before this war, politicians were using India as a pawn, both in Delhi and in Westminster, playing with the lives of millions for some small party advantage. To-morrow we must do better, if there is to be a to-morrow for the British Empire. There is a great opportunity, in which the reader of this little book can play his part. He may agree or not with my opinions. If he forms his own, on the facts, and exercises his vote, he may well be helping to shape mighty destinies.

We can crown with the laurels of wisdom the enterprise which "John Company" began merely for material gain. We can realise the aspirations of patriotic Indians, not perhaps in full, but to a large extent, so that history shall record of us that we brought old nations to a new birth, and increased through them the light of freedom.

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